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General von Steuben

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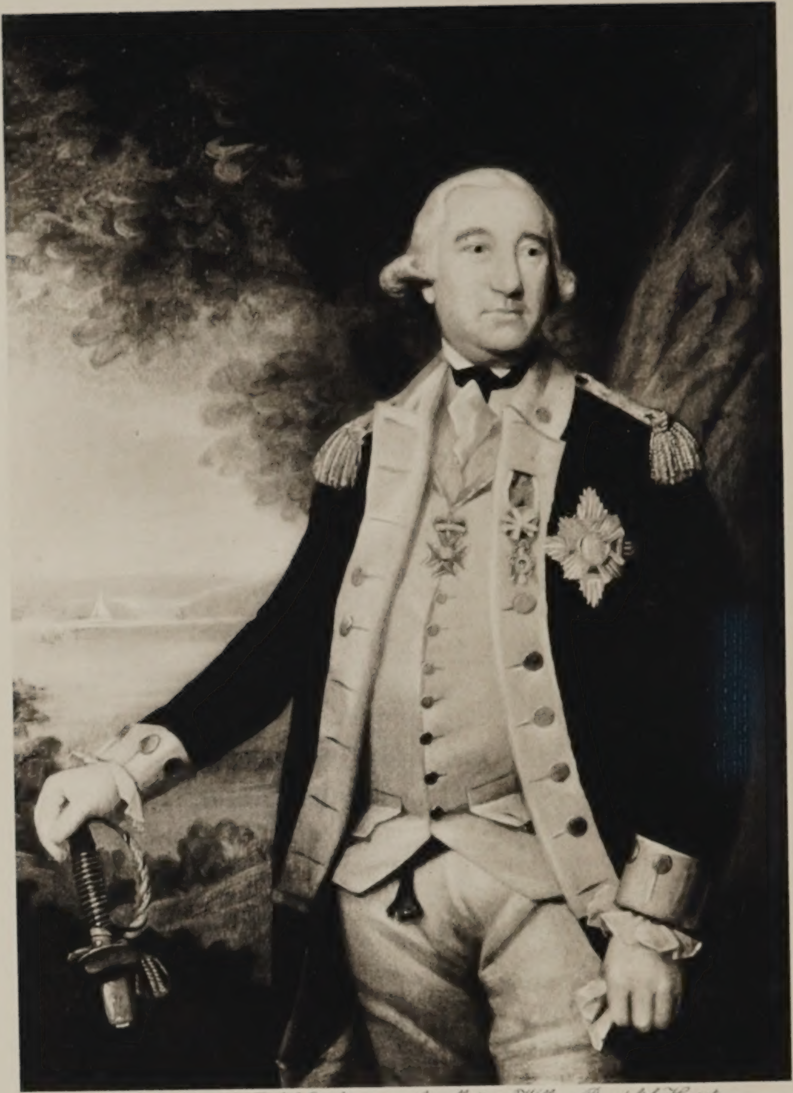

From a portrait by Ralph Earle, now in the collection of William Randolph Hearst

Steuben
Maj: General.

GENERAL VON STEUBEN

BY JOHN McAULEY PALMER

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

OTTO LEOPOLD SCHMIDT

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, THE ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE GERMAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ILLINOIS.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the late Dr. Otto L. Schmidt, to his brother Dr. Louis E. Schmidt and to his friends, Edgar J. Uihlein and Albert D. Lasker, for assistance without which it would have been impossible for me to make the researches required in writing this book.

My account of Steuben's latter years is based largely upon his correspondence with his American friends. These letters are now widely scattered in many private and public manuscript collections. In quoting or citing any one of them, I shall acknowledge my obligation to its owner or custodian.

During the progress of my work, I have profited by the advice, encouragement and assistance of more persons than it would be possible for me to name within the limits set for this book. Of these I can only say that on almost every page I gratefully recognize the help and guidance of some generous friend.

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BARON VON STEUBEN

PROLOGUE

THE MYTH AND THE MAN

AFTER my retirement from active service in the army, I undertook a thorough study of the Revolutionary War. In the course of my researches, I was soon convinced that the military services of two men, and of two men only, can be regarded as indispensable to the achievement of American independence. These two men were Washington and Steuben. When I say that their military services were indispensable I mean that each of them contributed something essential to final victory, that could not have been contributed by any other man then in the American Army. Brilliant as Greene's services were, it is conceivable that Lafayette or Wayne or some other general might have commanded the Southern army successfully. But it is not conceivable that any other American soldier could have borne Washington's burden of supreme responsibility. Nor is it conceivable that any other man could have given the technical assistance, essential to military success, that Steuben gave to his chief. Washington was the indispensable commander. Steuben was his indispensable staff officer.

Steuben's military services in America are presented very inadequately in the standard biography by Friedrich Kapp, published in 1859. This is largely due to an ignorance of military affairs which the author frankly confesses in his preface. I therefore determined to write a new life of the Baron. This appeared to be a useful and relatively simple task for an old soldier on the retired list. I assumed that I could rely upon Kapp for the facts of Steuben's life in Germany, and so limit my own contribution to a better interpretation of his purely military services in America.

But my task proved to be less simple than I expected. Early in the course of my studies, I learned from Dr. Otto L. Schmidt of Chicago, that Anton B. C. Kalkhorst, an accomplished German-American journalist, had devoted his last years to a history of Steuben's life in Germany; and that he had left this work unfinished when he died in 1927. Through Dr. Schmidt, I was able to open a correspondence with Mrs. Maria Kalkhorst, the author's widow, and to procure her husband's papers. These comprised a number of advance chapters of his book which he had published as articles in various German-American newspapers. There were other articles in printer's proof and still others in manuscript. His papers also included the notes of exhaustive researches in the Archives of Berlin, Karlsruhe and Hechingen, and his correspondence with scholars in Germany. I was thus given an opportunity to supplement Kapp's narrative with material from sources which were not accessible to him when he wrote his book.

In reading the Kalkhorst Papers, I soon became aware that there were gross misstatements of fact in Kapp's narrative. In short, I discovered that Steuben's pre-American history, as Kapp wrote it and as it has passed from his book into the encyclopedias and biographical dictionaries, is largely a myth.

Kalkhorst strongly censured Kapp for writing false history. At first, I was disposed to agree with him, but I soon learned that the fault lay with Steuben and not with his historian. I discovered that Kapp took all of his false biography from certain autobiographical sketches written by the Baron himself.

My first reaction upon discovering that my hero was a systematic, circumstantial and deliberate liar, was one both of disgust and disappointment. I was disposed to proceed no further with my book. Here was, indeed, a golden opportunity for a debunker or a muckraker, but that sensational role made no appeal to me. My curiosity was aroused, however, and I determined, if possible, to discover the motive for this remarkable falsification.

In due time, I was rewarded by discovering that the Baron was not the sole, and probably not even the principal father of the fictions. Indeed, he proved to be only one member of a syndicate in prevarication. As the other members of this syndicate were Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, the French War Minister, St. Germain, and the dramatist-intriguer, Beaumarchais; and as the falsehood contributed directly and powerfully to the success of the American struggle for independence, I found that my dislike was waning. Indeed, when I finally discovered that the real father of the falsehood was probably Benjamin Franklin and not my hero, I must confess to a distinct feeling of disappointment.

The whole story is a long one and will be told in due course in the pages of this book. But the gist of it must be given in anticipation. When Steuben came to America, he bore letters from Franklin introducing him to Washington and to prominent leaders of Congress as a lieutenant general in the service of the King of Prussia. It was through the prestige of this high rank and under the halo of Frederick the Great that he was able to impress the Continental Army and accomplish his great military reforms.

But his actual rank was not so exalted. The Prussian archives reveal that he was never higher than a captain in the Prussian service and that King Frederick dropped him from his army at the close of the Seven Years' War—more than fourteen years before he came to America.

When Franklin wrote those letters, he knew that Steuben was not a Prussian lieutenant general. He had learned from St. Germain that the Baron was a military expert of exceptional ability. He was convinced that the American Army needed his services. He therefore wrote his letters of introduction with his usual mastery of the art of advertising. To use a modern phrase, it was necessary *to sell the Baron* to the American people. So, in order to assure his sales value, Benjamin gave him the most effective trade-mark then known to the military profession. And Franklin's shrewd foresight was justified by the event. It was His Excellency, Lieutenant General Baron de Steuben, the apostle of Frederick the Great, who bore the gospel of military efficiency and discipline to the Continental Army. Captain von Steuben, with all his abilities, could never have accomplished it.

The actual captain remained in Europe and disappeared from history. The fictitious lieutenant general came to America and became a world figure. The Baron thus had a part to play and he played it as the consummate actor that he was. But unfortunately he was committed to the role for the rest of his life. He came in the pose of a distinguished foreign visitor of high rank and he could never afterwards descend from that pose. Was he not in honor bound to keep faith with Franklin and his other accomplices? So, in after years when he had occasion to write of his European past, he wrote the fictitious memoirs of the prosperous lieutenant general and not the actual memoirs of the impecunious discharged captain. Kapp found these documents among the Steuben Papers in the library of the New York Historical Society. Here was indeed a windfall for a biographer. As Kapp was a political refugee from Prussia at that time, he had no means of checking them with the records in Berlin. This is why Kalkhorst found so little of Kapp's Steuben in the Prussian archives.

But these memoirs are not the only source of apocryphal material. Kapp also found letters from Steuben to his friends in Germany in which he recounts his American achievements and adventures. In these letters, the Baron frequently drew the long bow. He made free use of what Mark Twain called embroidery. We should regard these private epistles as privileged communications. In writing them the Baron did not pretend that he was making source material for future historians. He was writing them purely for the entertainment and edification of his old companions. They would be pleased to learn that after his trials and misadventures in Germany, the wheel of fortune had at length turned in his favor.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the Baron did not suffer from the inhibition that cramped the flow of Washington's imagination. It was not physically impossible for him to adorn his tale with the flowers of fancy. I find it convenient to present this fact at the outset in order to simplify the telling of the tale. If my readers will bear in mind that they must take the Baron's personal communications with a grain of salt, they will frequently spare me the embarrassment of having to impeach my own witness when I put him on the stand. Were I permitted to quote the Baron only when he bears the tests of the higher criticism, some of his most characteristic and entertaining communications must be excluded from the record.

Nevertheless, from the standpoint of veracity, the Baron presents a singular case of dual personality. While he misled his American friends about his life in Germany and his German friends about his life in America, in his official military writings he was always truthful. Prolonged study of his official correspondence and other military papers shows them to be models of veracity and scientific precision.

PART I

LIFE IN EUROPE

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND BAPTISM

1

ON the pedestal of the Steuben monument in Washington, it is inscribed that Frederick William Augustus Henry Ferdinand, Baron von Steuben, was born on November 15, 1730. This has long been accepted as his date of birth. It rests upon the authority of Friedrich Kapp who obtained it from a member of the ancient Steuben family in Germany.

But through Kalkhorst's researches we now know that Steuben was born on September 17, 1730. In 1921, through correspondence with Dr. Schneider of Magdeburg, Kalkhorst obtained a photograph from the baptismal register of the old German Reformed Church in Magdeburg for the year 1730. A translation of this record follows:

2655 SEPTEMBER 24.

Herr William Augustin von Steube,* Lieutenant in the Royal Prussian Engineers of this place and his beloved wife, Maria Justina Dorothea von Jagow, had their son, born the seventeenth of this month, baptized with the name of Frederick William Ludolf Gerhard Augustin.

The Godparents

1. His Royal Majesty in Prussia, Frederick William.
2. Herr Ludolf von Lüderitz, Royal Prussian chief forester in the duchy of Magdeburg.
3. Herr Gerhard von Wallrave, Colonel of the Royal Prussian Artillery of this place [*i.e.*, the Fortress of Magdeburg].
4. Herr Augustin von Steube, chief preacher of the Reformed Parish of Brandenburg.

---

* The name appears as Stoebe, Steube and Stoyben in the earlier records. It finally became Steuben.

5. Frau von Metsch of the Nordstemke family.
6. Frau von Veltheim of the Aderstädt family.

2

WHILE the true date of Steuben's birth is sufficiently established by the foregoing record, it may be interesting to quote the Baron himself in confirmation. In 1786, on his fifty-sixth birthday, he wrote a letter, in French, to his young American friend and former aide-de-camp, William North. The opening paragraph of this letter is translated as follows:

> On the seventeenth of September, 1730, at six o'clock in the evening, there was born at Magdeburg, Frederick William Augustus, etc., etc., etc. This man is then fifty-six years old today.—Is he rich?—No. Is he wise?—No. Then what in the devil is he doing for such a long time in this world? He does not like to hang himself. Tell me then, my dear Billy, how ought he to get out of it.[1]

Here the Baron adds to the official record by giving us the hour of his birth. While we cannot admit him as an entirely competent witness in this autobiographical detail, we may infer that he obtained it from his parents. They were married sometime in 1729, the year before his birth. As he was the first-born of their ten children, we may safely assume that they retained a tolerably accurate impression as to the precise hour of his advent.

3

A GLANCE at the birth record will show how he came by his Christian name: FREDERICK WILLIAM LUDOLF GERHARD AUGUSTIN.

The *Frederick William* came from the first godfather, His Majesty, the King of Prussia and father of Frederick the Great. The *Ludolf* came from the second sponsor, a kinsman of his mother's. The *Gerhard* came from the third sponsor, an artillery officer of high rank, probably the commanding officer of the fortress of Magdeburg where the infant's father served.

The *Augustin* came from the fourth sponsor, the infant's grandfather. When the Baron arrived at years of discretion he did not like the clumsy name that his godparents imposed upon him. So, as we shall see later, he changed it to the more sonorous: Frederick William Augustus Henry Ferdinand. It is this revised name, and not his baptismal name, which is inscribed upon the Steuben monument in Washington.

4

The list of sponsors raises a most interesting question. Was King Frederick William present in person at his godson's christening? Under ordinary circumstances this might have happened. Steuben's father was a good officer who stood well in the favor of his commander in chief, the Soldier-King. His grandfather was a prominent preacher of the King's orthodox protestant faith. If the King had been inspecting his fortress of Magdeburg at that time, he might well have been present at the christening of this newest recruit to his army.

But almost certainly the father of Frederick the Great was elsewhere at that time. The month of September, 1730, was one of the most tragic months in Frederick William's life and in the annals of the royal house of Prussia. On the fifth day of that month, Frederick von Hohenzollern, Colonel of the Potsdam Guards and Crown Prince of Prussia, had been imprisoned in the fortress of Cüstrin as a deserter from the army. For some time he had been out of favor with his father. He had betrayed no taste and no aptitude for soldiering. He had even referred to his military uniform as his shroud. He preferred French poetry to sound, manly books on drill and tactics. He preferred the notes of his own flute to the martial tones of the drum and fife. And now after an unsuccessful attempt to escape across the Rhine, he was in prison as a deserter.

It was just at the time of Steuben's christening that the King was considering his son's fate. This was the momentous question before the "Tobacco Parliament" at Potsdam:

"What shall be done with deserter Fritz? Shall he be tried by court martial and shot?"

"No," someone would mutter through the tobacco fumes. "He is a king's son and a prince of the Holy Roman Empire."

"But," Frederick William would reply, "he is also a soldier and a colonel in my Potsdam Guards. He is a deserter and has induced other soldiers to desert. He is therefore subject to trial by court martial. And the sentence for desertion is death."

It was with this problem that the King was grappling during the latter half of September, 1730. He was not inspecting his fortress of Magdeburg at that time. We may therefore assume that he attended Steuben's christening only by proxy. The King and his troubles must have been in the minds of the little christening party. But if they spoke of "Deserter Fritz" they spoke with bated breath. For the King's proclamation had gone forth that tongues which gossiped on that forbidden subject should forthwith be cut out. This was the Prussia in which the infant Steuben was born at six o'clock in the evening on the seventeenth day of September, 1730.

CHAPTER II

THE STEUBEN ANCESTRY

1

IN the archives at Hechingen, there is a Steuben family tree which was prepared by the Baron's father. The archives at Karlsruhe contain a revised copy of this document prepared by the Baron himself, giving his descent, in the male line, as follows:

NIKOLAUS VON STEUBEN [great-great-grandfather].
Lord of Gerbstaedt and Schnädig, a member of the ancient noble family of Steuben.
LUDWIG VON STEUBEN [great-grandfather].
Lord of Ens and Gerbstaedt, Knight of St. John, son of Nikolaus by his second wife, Henrietta von Franken.
AUGUSTIN VON STEUBEN [grandfather].
Lord of Ens and Gerbstaedt, son of Ludwig by his wife, Louisa Catherina von Hell.
WILLIAM AUGUSTIN VON STEUBEN [father].
Officer in the Prussian Army, Knight of the Order *Pour le mérite*. A younger son of Augustin by his wife, Charlotte Dorothea von Effern.
FREDERICK WILLIAM AUGUSTUS HENRY FERDINAND VON STEUBEN [Baron von Steuben].
Eldest son of William Augustin by his wife, Maria Justina Dorothea von Jagow.

In the course of his researches, Kalkhorst discovered a serious defect in this line of descent. He found that Nikolaus von Steuben (born 1592, died 1656) was certainly an authentic member of the ancient family of Steuben. But the records prove that Nikolaus died without living issue and that his first wife survived him. He therefore had no second wife and no son, Ludwig von Steuben. As a matter of fact, no such person ever existed. Steuben's grandfather was indeed Augustin Steube, but he was a protestant parson of plebeian descent and not the "Lord of Ens and Gerbstaedt." It appears that late in life Augustin assumed the noble "von," thus changing his name from Steube to *von* Steube. Still later his son, William Augustin, with the assistance of some accommodating genealogist, invented "Ludwig von Steuben, Knight of St. John," as the necessary connecting link between his father and the ancient noble house of that name. Ludwig von Steuben thus proves to be a typical case of an ancestor manufactured *ex post facto* for genealogical convenience.[1]

2

THE Baron's actual descent in the male line, as determined by Kalkhorst, is given in the following table:

KLAUS STEUBE [great-great-grandfather].
A miller in Hesse. Names of parents unknown.

LUDWIG STEUBE [great-grandfather].
A tenant-farmer in Hesse, son of Klaus Steube by a wife whose name is unknown.

AUGUSTIN STEUBE [grandfather].
An ambitious self-made man, minister in the German Reformed Church, man of letters. He inserted the "von" in his name about 1708. Fourth son of Ludwig Steube by a wife whose name is unknown.

WILLIAM AUGUSTIN VON STEUBE [father].
Born at Vacha, 1699; died at Cüstrin, 1783. Officer in the Prussian Army, Knight of the Order *Pour le mérite*. Fourth son of Augustin Steube by his wife, Charlotte Dorothea von Effern.

FREDERICK WILLIAM LUDOLF GERHARD AUGUSTIN [our Baron von Steuben].
Alias Frederick William Augustus Henry Ferdinand, BARON VON STEUBEN. Born at Magdeburg, 1730; died near

Utica, N. Y., 1794. Officer in the Prussian Army, 1746–63. Major General, United States Army, 1778–84. Eldest child of William Augustin von Steube by his wife, Maria Justina Dorothea von Jagow.

The foregoing diagram rather overemphasizes the strain of plebeian ancestry. For, notwithstanding his spurious claims to noble descent on the male side, our Steuben had a reasonable share of blue blood in his veins. His mother was a daughter of the Von Jagows and his paternal grandmother was of the highest noble descent. The very genealogists who deny his grandfather, Augustin, a place among the elect, trace the blood of his grandmother, Charlotte Dorothea von Effern, step by step back to "Karl the Great" and St. Elizabeth.[2] The American reader will be content with this compromise. On the one side the blood imperial of Charlemagne; on the other side that of a successful self-made man, a rare phenomenon in eighteenth-century Prussia.

CHAPTER III

GRANDPARENTS

1

AUGUSTIN STEUBE, the Baron's grandfather, was born in the village of Heldra in Hesse, in 1661. His father was Ludwig Steube, a tenant-farmer. His grandfather was Klaus Steube, a miller. As Augustin had three elder brothers, his father could make no provision for him. He was therefore destined to the lot of a peasant laborer. But he was an ambitious youngster. He made such unusual progress in the village school that he awakened the interest of the schoolmaster. Under that friendly pedagogue he studied Latin and history and mathematics and was encouraged to enter the ministry—the only liberal profession then open to a young man of humble birth.

The main facts of Augustin's life are clear.[1] In his twenty-first year he was "afternoon preacher," a sort of chaplain, in the Castle of Schmalkalden. The same year we find him preaching in the Palatinate; and, at the age of twenty-seven, he became pastor of the Reformed Church at Leimer, near Heidelberg.

This same year, 1688, he married Charlotte Dorothea von Effern, a young lady of the bluest blood and a countess by birth. This was a most unusual *mésalliance* for the time. We have no details of the romantic courtship through which a lady of high degree became the bride of a plebeian preacher. We know only that Augustin met Dorothea while acting as tutor in some noble family; that they were married in 1688; and that the bride, though of exalted birth, was poor. As the marriage was a fruitful one and as the couple lived together until the death of the countess at a ripe old age, we may venture to assume that the youthful Augustin was well endowed with those gifts of mind and person that appeal to a woman's heart.

2

AT the end of their first year of married life, a son, Christian Ludwig, was born to the Steubes. A second son, Johann Karl Constans, was born two years later. Both of these children were baptized in Heidelberg. During the year 1693, a French army invaded the Rhineland and Augustin fled with his family to Cassell where their first daughter, Maria Emilia, was born shortly after their arrival.

In December, 1693, Augustin found a place as assistant pastor at Vacha in Saxe-Weimar. There a son, Christian Moritz, was born in 1695 and died in infancy. There, also, Charlotte Wilhelmina, was born in 1697, and William Augustin, the Baron's father, in 1699.

That year, 1699, was a tragic one for Frau Steube. While her newest son was still a babe in arms, her husband was found guilty of an illicit love affair with a serving maid, Elizabeth Shuetz. The church records at Vacha show that for this Parson Augustin did penance before the entire congregation on Advent Sunday; lost his pastorate and was imprisoned for about sixteen days. A fine also was imposed upon him, but this was remitted at the request of his wife.

After serving his prison sentence, the unfrocked parson moved with his family to Wanfried in Hesse. There he was restored to good standing in the ministry and became pastor of the Reformed Church in Drossen. At about this time a seventh child was born and died in infancy, and then with the usual two-year intervals between them, the Countess Charlotte Dorothea presented her husband with her eighth child, Christiana Polixena, her ninth child, August Gottlieb, and her tenth child, Gottfried Gerhard.

3

WHILE at Drossen, Parson Steube entered upon an active literary career. During the rest of his life he published many curious treatises on the theological theories of his day. In one of these he proved by an ingenious mathematical calculation that the Advent predicted in the Book of Revelations would occur in the year 1740. His *Rechtiger Weg zur Besserung der Kirchen* (Correct Way to Improve the Church) was published in 1704 or 1705. His *Eröffnetes Aurerum Seculum und Christguldene Zeit* (Golden Age of Man Inaugurated) and his *Christliche Hauss-Kirche* (Religious Devotions in a Christian Home) appeared in 1705.

But Steube's literary activities were soon interrupted. His theological effusions were regarded by many as heretical and, for a time, aroused serious controversy and opposition in the church. Then he had the misfortune to shoot and kill a young boy. This was proved to be accidental and without criminal intent, but it led to his resignation from his charge at Drossen. Thereupon, the Steubes with their numerous family made a new migration. During the years 1706–7, according to Stöbe, they probably lived in Berlin. In the latter year, Augustin published his *Herrn Christi Tischgenossen* (The Lord's Table Companion). His writings probably added little to his income, but they were effective professional advertising. So in 1708 he was called to a new pastorate in Drechen.

4

THEIR installation at Drechen marks a new epoch in the story of Augustin's family. Prior to that time, his name appears in all the old church records as plain Augustin Steube. Thereafter it appears as Augustin *von* Steube. In assuming this symbol of noble descent, he was too shrewd to attempt the construction of a detailed pedigree, as his son, William Augustin, did later. He simply let it out, more or less casually, that he was descended from an obscure branch of the noble family of Von Steube (or Steuben) which had been ruined by the chaotic conditions existing in Germany during the Thirty Years' War. This was plausible enough, as many gentle families had lost their estates and their fortunes in that great struggle.

It is probable that Frau Steube was the moving spirit in the perpetration of this fraud. She had never forgotten that she was a countess by birth who had allied herself with the son of a low-born Hessian farmer. Apparently her noble kinsmen, the Von Efferns, aided and encouraged the procedure. They were glad in this way to help her blur over the stain she had brought to their escutcheon.

But pride of birth, though a sufficient motive, was reënforced by more material considerations. Augustin was a poor man with four sons and three daughters to establish in life. For his sons, the lower grades of the ministry now offered the only escape from the vulgar castes of the laborer and the tradesman. For his daughters, there could be no marriage into the condition for which their mother had reared them. On the other hand, with the "von" attached to their names, both sons and daughters could climb higher in the world. The sons, with other impecunious young noblemen, could enter the king's service as officers in his army or as gentlemen in his civil service. Both sons and daughters could look forward to profitable marriages.

No doubt the Countess Charlotte Dorothea had contemplated this fraud for many years. But it did not become practicable until after she settled in Drechen. Prior to that, Augustin had resided too near the homes of his humble Hessian kindred. Until he came to Drechen, too many of his neighbors might remember him as the grandson of plain Klaus Steube, the miller.

The Steubes were successful with the falsification. For many years their gentility was accepted without question. Frau von Steube thus secured all of the practical advantages which she sought for her family. Thanks to the pilfered "von," three of her four sons and two of her grandsons became officers in the Prussian Army. Also two of her three daughters married scions of the aristocracy.

5

WHEN the Steubes settled at Drechen, Augustin was forty-seven years old and Charlotte Dorothea was forty-five. Their eldest child, Christian Ludwig, was nineteen and their youngest, Gottfried Gerhard, was one. During their seventeen years at Drechen they were busy with the education of their children and the business of establishing them in life. This was greatly facilitated by their assumption of the privileges of nobility, but it was also forwarded in more worthy and substantial ways. Augustin was himself a well-educated man. He saw to it that his sons were well grounded in mathematics and the classics and, in spite of his limited means, contrived to send them to the University.

The eldest son, Christian Ludwig, studied at Leyden and Halle. He so distinguished himself in the mathematical sciences that about 1715 he was appointed a captain of engineers in the army of Friesland. Fourteen years later King Frederick William recalled him and gave him the same rank in the Prussian service. Still later he left the Prussian Army and entered the Danish service where he became a colonel. He was an able engineer and mathematician and is remembered as the author of treatises on artillery and fortification that were important in their day.

The second son, Johann Karl Constans, was also a student at Halle. He died, however, in early manhood. William Augustin, the Baron's father, studied for a short time at Halle with his two elder brothers. In 1715, at the age of sixteen he entered the Prussian Army as a *fahnen-junker* (standard-bearer) in the Von Gersdorf Regiment. Later, he was promoted ensign in the new Von Barteleben Regiment.

The Countess Charlotte Dorothea educated her daughters as gentlewomen and prepared them for their proper destiny in matrimony. Maria Emilia married into the Von Hagenback family. Charlotte Wilhelmina married Baron von Monsbrug. The youngest daughter, Christiana Polixena, remained a spinster and cared for her parents in their old age.

But there was a skeleton in the home of the Steubens. All of the children knew that their parents had perpetrated a fraud. They all accepted the false "von" and they all profited by it. They had learned through the most revered example in life, that it is permissible to exchange strict veracity for material worldly advantage. Christian Ludwig was about nineteen years old when his plain name of Steube suddenly became Von Steube. He became a capable and successful man and he bore the false insigne with him to Denmark, where he transmitted it to his descendants.

William Augustin, the Baron's father, was only nine years old when the change was made. Possibly he did not understand it then. But later, when he wrote out the family pedigree for his son, he well knew that his father was a poor parson and not the "Lord of Ens." Here was one element in the education of William Augustin that was more indelible in his character and in the character of his children than all that he acquired in the schools at Drechen or in the University at Halle.

6

WHILE living in Drechen, the Reverend Steube continued his literary labors. In 1715, the year that his son, William Augustin, entered the Prussian Army, he published his *Neue Creatur in Christe* (Regeneration through Christ). Six years later there appeared his *Historische Zeit-Tabelle* (Religious History); and in 1723 his most comprehensive work, *Erklärung des Neuen Testaments* (Commentary on the New Testament). In the preface to this book the learned author refers briefly to his descent from the noble Steube family through a branch that had lost its distinctions and estates during the Thirty Years' War. This book attracted much favorable consideration in its day. The author's literary prestige, together with his noble descent, prepared the way for preferment in the Church. So, in 1725, at the age of sixty-four, Augustin was called to a new charge as chief preacher in King Frederick William's Reformed Church at Brandenburg. There he passed the remainder of his life.

Seventeen twenty-nine was an eventful year for William Augustin; he was gazetted to the Royal Engineers and was married to Maria Justina Dorothea von Jagow. On September 17, the following year, she presented her husband with his first son, the subject of this book. We know that when this child was christened a week later, his grandfather was one of the sponsors. The records do not specify that he was present in person. But as the season of the year was fine and as Magdeburg is only forty-five miles from Brandenburg, it is not improbable that he and his wife assisted in the presentation of their grandson to the Church. Knowing them as we now do, we may even venture to suppose that Grandfather Augustin and Grandmother Charlotte Dorothea had a hand in selecting the godparents—that the infant might have influential connections in this life as well as beatitude in the life to come.

Three years later, the Countess Charlotte Dorothea died at Brandenburg, in the seventieth year of her life and in the forty-fifth year of her marriage. For five years more Pastor Augustin lived with his youngest daughter, Christiana Polixena. He died in 1738, two years before the fateful Advent Year of his prophecy.

CHAPTER IV

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

1

THERE are but few records of Steuben's childhood. But it is clear that he was reared in poverty. His father, a younger son of an impecunious clergyman, had no means beyond his meager pay and allowances as a captain* in the Prussian Army. And his poverty was the peculiarly painful poverty of the shabby genteel. His peasant cousins in Hesse might find wealth in trade and thrift. But that safe avenue to fortune was beneath the dignity of gentle blood. Thanks to the purloined "von," William Augustin was an officer and a gentleman. He belonged to the nobility. If he were to win fortune he must marry it or carve it out with his sword. He closed the first of these approaches when he wedded Fräulein von Jagow. She brought him a generous dowry of noble blood but no increase of worldly goods.

As for winning wealth and honors with the sword, there was little chance in Prussia. King Frederick William had the best trained army in Europe, but his policy was to profit by its potential threat rather than by employing it. Besides, he was an artist and loved his perfect battalions and his giant guardsmen too much to risk marring their beauty in the shock of battle. So Captain von Steuben sought service in Russia, where there was always fighting and where many German soldiers were winning wealth and honors at the cannon's mouth. In fact, the commander in chief of the Russian Army at that time was a German soldier of fortune, Count Münnich, a native of Oldenburg.

Frederick William was always willing that his officers should have practice in the art of war at the expense of his neighbors, so with his consent, Captain von Steuben entered the service of the Czarina Anne. He set out for Russia in 1731, taking his wife and infant son with him. Upon his departure, the King decorated him with the Royal Prussian Order *De la Générosité*.

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* He was promoted to captain late in 1730.

2

OUR Steuben was one year old when his parents took him to Russia. We know little of their Russian home life. In a brief family history which he wrote in 1766,[1] Captain von Steuben informs us that his daughter, Dorothea Maria Justina, was born at the fortress of Cronstadt in 1733—when her brother was three years old. He also records that though he returned to Germany in 1739, he left five children buried in Russia—two at Cronstadt, one at St. Petersburg and two at Riga. This gives us our only clues as to where Frau von Steuben made her home while her husband was at the wars. Her Russian campaign was quite as strenuous as his. In ten years she had borne him seven children, at least—for one of the two children buried later at Breslau may have been born in Russia.

The young Steuben's first memories were therefore of Russia. There were pictures of crowded garrison life at Cronstadt and other fortresses; glimpses of his mother's frugal housekeeping in her crowded billet; of his father marching off to fight the Turks in Crimea; of merry games with the children of other officers and the rough horseplay of hirsute soldiers in their barracks. There were other pictures of the palaces, the churches and the crowded streets of St. Petersburg, the pageantry of the Imperial Guards marching in review before some exalted personage on horseback, perhaps the great soldier of fortune, Marshal Münnich himself. There may have been a picture of the Empress Anne surrounded by her brilliant staff. He was to know the great Czarina, Catherine, later.

3

THERE may have been memories of another garrison home at Riga. But perhaps the two little graves there only marked the hardships of the family's long pilgrimage back to Germany. Nobody traveled *de luxe* in those days. Captain von Steuben probably rode his war horse—sometimes, no doubt, with little Frederick William perched above the great pistol holsters in front of him. Frau von Steuben with Dorothea and the baby rode with her meager household goods in a baggage wagon; hundreds of miles of it at perhaps fifteen miles a day—when the roads were good.

Our Frederick William must have remembered that journey distinctly. He was a brown-eyed youngster of nine years when he made it. His little sister, Dorothea, was six. No doubt he also remembered some of the brothers and sisters who were left to their long sleep in Russia. As we shall see later, he was always a great lover of children and was greatly beloved by them. But among his memory pictures there were no portraits of Grandfather Augustin and Grandmother Charlotte Dorothea. They both died in Brandenburg while he was a young child in Russia. For aught he knew then, Grandfather Steube was indeed the "Lord of Ens."

4

CAPTAIN von Steuben's service in Russia was honorable but it brought him neither wealth nor fame. He was not one of the fortunate soldiers of fortune. Perhaps with his numerous family he had given too many hostages to that capricious and jealous lady. During the years 1733 and 1734 he served in the war of the Polish Succession, and distinguished himself in the hard fighting near Danzig. From 1736 to 1739 he fought under Marshal Münnich in the war against the Turks, taking an honorable part in the Crimean campaign. In 1739, upon the order of King Frederick William, he resumed his service in the Prussian Army. He returned to Germany as poor as ever. His father's failure to win wealth and fame in Russia provided one lesson for our little Frederick William. It taught him that soldiers of fortune should not burden themselves with such useless impedimenta as a dowerless wife and children. But it did not dampen his faith that glory and riches were to be won with the sword. That was how his boyhood hero, the great Marshal Münnich, had won them.

5

Where the Steubens first made their home upon their return to Prussia, we do not know. But toward the close of his tenth year, an event occurred that the boy always remembered. On the last day of May, 1740, King Frederick William died and a new king came to the Prussian throne. The "Deserter Fritz" of ten years ago now became King Frederick II. And it soon became apparent that it would no longer be necessary for Prussian officers to go abroad for active soldiering. The new king opened his reign with a surprise attack on his neighbor, the Empress-Queen, Maria Theresa. Before the end of the year, he led his army into her province of Silesia. A few days after New Year's Day he entered its capital city, Breslau. On April 10, 1741, he defeated the Austrians at Mollwitz. On November 1, his soldiers entered Neisse, the last of Maria Theresa's fortresses to resist him. So soon had our "Deserter Fritz" become Frederick the Great.

If Mollwitz was a day of victory for the Prussian Army it was a day of sorrow for the Steuben family. Among the dead was the boy's uncle, August Gottlieb, a lieutenant in the Kalkstein Regiment. At the end of the campaign his father, Captain von Steuben, was promoted to the grade of major. He was also decorated for his services at the siege of Neisse. What these services were we do not know. But they were meritorious indeed for they procured him the Order *Pour le mérite* from Frederick the Great.

Steuben spent the rest of his boyhood in the new Prussian province of Silesia. At the end of the campaign his father took quarters in the fortress of Neisse. A little later he was transferred to the garrison of Breslau. Major Steuben has written that his youngest son, Hans Alexander Siegfried, was born at Breslau in 1743. There also two infant sons were buried. The major was stationed at Breslau until after the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. There our Frederick William lived with his parents until his seventeenth year when he, too, entered the Prussian Army. And there he continued to live as a young officer, for his regiment formed part of the great garrison of Breslau.

6

STEUBEN received his early schooling at Neisse and continued his education at Breslau, where the Jesuits had established a University. According to his sister, the Baroness von Canitz, he was instructed by the Jesuits, especially in the mathematical sciences.[2] His school days, though brief, at least had the advantage of a definite objective. He was destined for the army from the beginning. He knew only the soldier's life. And the soldier's profession was the only one open to the son of a poor army officer. It was the one suitable career for a garrison-bred boy in the glorious days of Frederick the Great.

We may be sure that his father was his principal military tutor. Major von Steuben was an educated man and an accomplished military engineer. Nor was he a purely theoretical instructor. When he went to the Second Silesian War in 1744, he took his son with him. There Frederick William, as a boy of fourteen, was present at the siege of Prague[3] and began his practical training for the siege of Yorktown.

Toward the close of his life, the Baron referred to his education as follows:

> The troubles of a military life, the narrow circumstances of my parents and their frequent changes of residence, did not permit them to give me any better education than that which a poor young nobleman in Prussia always receives. But while other young officers led a dissolute and extravagant life, I applied myself closely to study, and exerted myself not only to learn my profession, but to enlarge my knowledge of belles-lettres and the practical sciences. Nevertheless, from want of time and the necessary means, I made only slow progress.[4]

The foregoing statement appears to be unduly modest. Steuben was much better educated than the average Prussian officer of his day. He wrote better German than most of his contemporaries. He also spoke and wrote French fluently, though his spelling was generally bad. As we shall see later, his letters are full of allusions to the important literature of his day. The Jesuit fathers in Breslau gave him more than mathematics. They led him into the world of books.

CHAPTER V

IN THE PRUSSIAN ARMY: GARRISON LIFE

1

IT appears from records in the Prussian State Archives, that Steuben entered the Lestwitz Regiment of infantry as a lance corporal (*Gafreiten-Korporal*) some time in 1746. The month and day of his entry into the service are not in the records, but it will be noted that it was before his seventeenth birthday. His regiment was quartered in Breslau where his father was stationed. He therefore retained his touch with his home and continued to enjoy the facilities of the university and its library. He was promoted ensign May 3, 1749 and second lieutenant, November 26, 1752, in the same regiment. He was then just past twenty-two years old.[1]

We have no other record of Steuben during these early years of his military career. But these were certainly busy years. He was a subaltern in the army of Frederick the Great and served in one of his finest infantry regiments. He was one of the cogs in the most perfect military machine in the world. There were few idle hours in the military day. Every day throughout the year there were rigid drills and the drill year culminated in prolonged field maneuvers under the eye of Frederick himself. Steuben's regiment was a strict school in which he learned every detail of the military business and above all the secret of discipline. To say that he was a lieutenant in King Frederick's Lestwitz Regiment is to say that he was a member of the most highly trained corps of infantry officers in the world.

2

BUT even the Lestwitz Regiment did not drill on Sundays and holidays, or for the whole twenty-four hours on week days.

There were hours of leisure even in that busy garrison city of Breslau. And how did young Steuben use them? He tells us in the passage above quoted: "While other young officers led a dissolute and extravagant life, I applied myself closely to study."

We must take this passage with a grain of salt. It implies a smugness not at all in keeping with Steuben's character. While we have but few glimpses of his youthful years, he will be under our observation almost every day of the sixteen years he spent in America. We shall see him again and again through the eyes of many observers, both friends and enemies, and especially in his own amusing and self-revealing letters. Here we have all the ephemerides of a clear-cut life-orbit from his prime to his old age; and we may safely assume that it followed the same curve before it traversed our own constellations.

Our young officer applied himself to study but not solely to mathematics and military art. He became intimately acquainted with Don Quixote, whom he greatly admired and to whom he very justly compared himself on a momentous occasion in his later life. He also read Voltaire and with special interest just at that time, for the poet was then living in Prussia as the guest and crony of His Majesty, the Poetaster of Potsdam. Steuben was especially delighted with *Candide* and drew much of his life philosophy from it. Frequently in his later years, when down on his luck, he would invoke Doctor Pangloss and reproach him for his doctrine that "this is the best of all possible worlds."

He was always a "good mixer," a jovial companion and "hale fellow well met." If the elderly general enjoyed a convivial glass and a broad jest with the young officers at Valley Forge, we may safely assume that the youthful lieutenant did not avoid them with his fellow subalterns in the Lestwitz Regiment. Later, we shall examine some letters from a brother officer, written after the Baron left the regiment. They reveal him as one of a lively crew of young bachelors in barracks, sharing their follies as well as their virtues.

Neither Kapp, nor Kalkhorst, nor Stöbe, with all their diligence, give us any trace of a youthful sweetheart. If our lieutenant received any love letters, he was too much a gentleman to preserve them. But in his American days he was always a lady's man in the best sense of the word. Mistress George Washington, Mistress Nathanael Greene, Mistress James Duane, Mistress Richard Peters and other ladies enjoyed his witty conversation and his courtly old-world manners. William North, his American aide-de-camp, refers to the Baron's "graceful entry and carriage in a ball room" as a well-known social phenomenon of that day. We may assume then that when there was a ball or a rout in the garrison of Breslau, Lieutenant von Steuben forsook his studies and paid his devoirs to Frau von Lestwitz and the other matrons of his regiment—and then danced the minuet and the gavotte with their daughters.

He was also a genial host. Early in the month, before his month's pay was spent; or later, indeed, when he could borrow from one of his many friends, he gave *petits soupers*, as he called them, to his regimental comrades and their gay friends in the neighborhood. These, also, are among the well-plotted ephemerides of his life-orbit. In short, he was a charming man full of zest for all the good things of life and always eager to share them with his friends; always hospitable and charitable beyond his means; always ready to borrow from Peter for the relief or the entertainment of Paul.

There seems to be no early portrait of him, but one can picture him very clearly. A young man of middle height rather solidly built, light brown hair, brown-gray eyes and rosy German cheeks. A high forehead, but with a full-lipped sensuous mouth generally smiling. An erect, well set-up young soldier in his snug-fitting uniform, ready to bend in a precise bow. By no means an ascetic young scholar. A lover of books, yes; but a greater lover of life.

3

In the summer of his twenty-fourth year we have a more definite glimpse of the young lieutenant. On June 4, 1754, he was in command of a detachment of his company at work extending the fortress of Schweidnitz in the new province of Silesia. This appears from a letter written that day to his young friend, Count von Donnersmark, a councilor of the Supreme Court of the province. An extract from this letter, translated from the French, follows:

> While you, my dear Count, are figuring in the temple of Themis, I am condemned to a most revolting occupation. A work that M. De Balby[*] has traced across a cemetery, requires the cutting of a deep ditch, in the course of which half-decomposed dead bodies are continually disinterred. I fear for my poor soldiers. The noisome exhalations will become more insupportable as the season advances. I order vinegar, brandy, tobacco, in short, everything that I can think of for their protection. . . . As yet I have no sick, but I fear the month of July. In order not to alarm them, I am continually at work, notwithstanding my disgust for this abominable occupation, and my subordinates are obliged to follow my example —*ora pro nobis!*
>
> The fortifications are extensive, and appear to me to be well planned. I should like them to be more solid, and then this place would be well adapted for the King's purposes, to serve him as a great depot in case we go to war with *la grande dame*. . . .[†]
>
> What do your Berlin correspondents say? Are Mesdames Elizabeth[‡] and Marie Therese vexed with our great King? I should be happy if they were, although I am more gallant with the ladies than my master. I am extremely anxious to have an encounter, even as an apprentice, with these two Amazons. Yes, my dear Henry, if there is a war, I promise you, at the end of a second campaign, that your friend will be either in Hades, or at the head of a regiment.[2]

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[*] King Frederick's chief of Engineers.

[†] Maria Theresa of Austria.

[‡] The Czarina Elizabeth.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE PRUSSIAN ARMY: WAR

1

LIEUTENANT STEUBEN'S reference to impending war is significant. For war was already brewing. While he was digging his trenches in Silesia, a future friend of his, young Lieutenant Colonel Washington of the Virginia militia, a precocious youth of twenty-two, was in close contact with the French to the west of the Alleghenies. While Steuben was writing his letter to Count von Donnersmark, this young Virginian was lighting the powder train that was to explode into a world war. After months of diplomatic jockeying the lines were finally drawn in the spring and summer of 1756. In May, England declared war against France. The following month France declared war against England. France allied herself with Austria and Russia. Prussia allied herself with England. Early in September, King Frederick's main army entered Dresden and the Seven Years' War was on.

Steuben's regiment was in the Silesian Army under Field Marshal von Schwerin. It was planned that Schwerin should cross the Giant Mountains and join Frederick for a decisive campaign deep in Bohemia. But it took the King longer than he expected to dispose of the Saxon Army and he was detained near Dresden. Schwerin therefore occupied the Königgrätz region of Bohemia until late in the autumn when he returned to Silesia for winter quarters in the Schweidnitz country. Steuben's first campaign was therefore inactive. He had marched over into Bohemia and then marched home again.

2

AMONG the fragmentary memorials of Steuben in the Prussian archives is his "Efficiency Report" as his colonel, Major General von Lestwitz, wrote it in those winter quarters. It appears in the *Konduiten Liste* of the Lestwitz Regiment for the year 1756:

> *Lieutenant Frederick William von Steuben*
> Age: 26 years, 6 months
> Service: 10 years, 6 months
> Birthplace: Magdeburg
> Has taken part in no action or siege
> No good as a manager, but clever
>
> (Signed) Von Lestwitz

The original German of the last line of this "Efficiency Report" is "*Kein guter Wirt, aber geschickt.*" I am informed by a distinguished German officer that this "rating" means that Lieutenant von Steuben, though a bright officer, was not a good manager of his private business affairs. In short, General von Lestwitz classed him among those lighthearted and extravagant young officers who spend their month's pay before the tenth of the month, and who therefore burden the adjutant's office with bills, duns and other evidences of improvidence.

If my German friend is correct in this interpretation, we must recognize General von Lestwitz as one of the most accurate judges of human nature in history. His rating is prophetic of the Baron's whole history. He was *kein guter Wirt* to the end of his life. In his fifty-eighth year his two closest American friends, his former aides-de-camp, North and Walker, were struggling to get him out of debt. In a letter at this time, North wrote to Walker that the Baron always wanted to eat his calf while it was still in the cow's belly. Here we may find a key to his peculiar personality. There was something refractory in him that even the Prussian drill master could not mold. He became a highly disciplined soldier, but he never became a self-disciplined man.

3

Steuben had plenty of fighting during the next campaign. By that time the Austrians and the French and the Russians were assembling 430,000 men against King Frederick's 150,000. His enemies expected that the King would stand on the defensive in the Dresden region until they could assemble to overwhelm him. But King Frederick completely upset their calculations. He decided to attack the Austrians before the French and the Russians could support them. He therefore marched directly southward into Bohemia and ordered Schwerin to cross the mountains and meet him at Prague. The two Prussian armies joined on May 6. The King determined to attack at once before the enemy could be reënforced and while the odds against him were still only two to one. Here the Prussians won a complete victory but with great losses. The victorious Schwerin was killed. The Lestwitz Regiment was in the thick of the fight and lost heavily. According to his father, Lieutenant Steuben was twice wounded but not severely.

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This was the famous battle of Prague of which Carlyle wrote: "Battle of Prag, one of the furious battles of the World; loud as Doomsday: The very Emblem of which, done on the Piano by females of energy, scatters mankind to flight who love their ears."

Here our Steuben had his baptism of fire.

In 1758, we find Lieutenant von Steuben detached from his regiment and serving in the famous "free battalion" of General Johann von Mayr.[1] This was one of the special independent commands that King Frederick formed during the winter of 1756–57. These free corps were organized for swift raids and other special missions away from the main army. They were composed of picked officers and men, many of them volunteer adventurers. They each comprised about 1300 infantry and 200 hussars with a battery of five cannon and a small wagon train. They became famous throughout the Seven Years' War, and of all the free corps commanders, Von Mayr was the King's favorite. According to Carlyle, his battalion was in the van of the army as it approached the battlefield of Rossbach and the King rode with him. After the battle it took an active part in the pursuit of the French and the attacks on their rear guard.

We know that Steuben was Von Mayr's adjutant and principal staff officer in the campaign of 1758. When he joined the free battalion, we do not know. He may have been with it as early as November, 1757. If so, he rode to the battlefield of Rossbach under the eye of Frederick the Great himself. Throughout his life the Baron boasted with pride that he had taken part in this battle. As the Lestwitz Regiment was not at Rossbach, Steuben, if he was there, must have served as a staff officer or in some other form of detached service.

During the summer of 1758, Von Mayr's battalion served with the army of Prince Henry of Prussia in the Franken country. It performed brilliant services in the operations leading to the battle of Hochkirch and later in the operations about Dresden. After the year's campaign it went into winter quarters at Plauen in Saxony.

That Steuben was selected as the staff officer of the great free corps commander is an unquestioned tribute to his professional standing. It marks him as a competent staff officer, as well as a dashing, fighting soldier. And there can be no question that his service with Von Mayr was an important step in his military education. His rigid training as an infantry subaltern was now supplemented by responsible staff duty with a small but independent force of all arms. This brought him to the notice of the King and, more important still, his experience with irregular troops broadened him for his future role in America. The dash and fighting efficiency of Von Mayr's half-trained adventurers served to correct the narrow and pedantic tradition of the hidebound professional officer.

Von Mayr's career was as brief as it was brilliant. He died suddenly in January, 1759. In a brief biography of him published that year, Pauli gives a list of his officers in which we have the following significant sentence: "His adjutant was Lieutenant von Steuben of the Lestwitz regiment, an able and pleasant officer."[2] This brief note of Pauli's is characteristic. Throughout his life, every observer of Steuben was impressed by his attractive personality as well as by his professional skill.

4

After Von Mayr's death Steuben was assigned as staff officer (*Brigade-Offizier*) to General von Hülsen. He was therefore probably with Hülsen when he commanded the right column of Prince Henry's army on its march into Bohemia in April, 1759. Early in June, Hülsen was dispatched with 10,000 men to join Von Dohna who was resisting the Russian advance in the Oder region. Presumably Steuben was present on this march and in the battles of Kay and Züllichau.

While serving on Hülsen's staff, Steuben attracted the attention of Prince Henry of Prussia, the King's brother. The fame of this general has been eclipsed by the wider renown of Frederick the Great. But he was probably the ablest Prussian commander in the Seven Years' War. After the war the King avowed that Henry was the only general who had made no strategic or tactical blunders—and Frederick frankly included himself among the blunderers. It is established that Steuben served on the staff of one of the Prince's subordinate commanders, and there are indications that he served for a time at the army headquarters. It is certain that he gained the regard of the Prince and enjoyed his friendship for the rest of his life. Later when Steuben lost the favor of the King, Prince Henry gave him substantial aid and comfort. They were in friendly correspondence with each other long after the Baron went to America.

The disastrous battle of Kunersdorf was fought on August 12, 1759. The records give Steuben among the list of wounded officers in the Lestwitz Regiment. King Frederick was among the wounded as was Von Hülsen and most of his other generals. The Lestwitz Regiment distinguished itself in this battle and in spite of heavy losses covered the King's withdrawal. Though still enrolled in this regiment, Steuben was probably still detached on staff duty.

According to a record in the archives, Steuben was promoted first lieutenant on November 30, 1759. He was then twenty-nine years old. We are unable to find any special reference to him during the campaign of 1760. Presumably he was still detached from his regiment and on staff duty under General von Hülsen during most of the year. If so, he took part in the battles of Liegnitz, Strehla and Torgau.

The archives show that until May 16, 1761, Steuben's name was still borne on the rolls of the Lestwitz Regiment. But on June 26 he is noted as "Transferred." His subsequent history indicates that on this date he was transferred to the Royal Suite (general headquarters) though I have found no definite record of this. It is confirmed however by his father who says, in his family history, that in 1761 his son was transferred from his regiment and made a deputy quartermaster (*Quartiermeister Leutnant*).

This appointment was of great importance in Steuben's history and requires some explanation. It is generally supposed that the German *Quartiermeister* is the equivalent of the English or American "quartermaster." This is a great error and has led to a serious misunderstanding of Steuben's military education and his professional status. The American quartermaster is essentially a supply officer. On the other hand, the German *Quartiermeister* is essentially a general staff officer. The principal assistant of the chief of the German General Staff was the quartermaster general. It will be recalled that during the World War General von Ludendorf was *Quartiermeister General* under Von Hindenberg. When Steuben became a *Quartiermeister Leutnant* he became what we would call a "General Staff officer with troops." He had served in that capacity under Von Mayr. As "*Brigade-Offizier*" he had served in the same capacity under General von Hülsen. His appointment as *Quartiermeister Leutnant* was his recognition by the King as a competent General Staff officer; that is, an officer qualified to assist a general in his strategic capacity and not merely in his administrative capacity. King Frederick's voluminous instructions for the training of his *Quartiermeister* are instructions for training in the high art of leading troops on the march and in battle. Their subject matter is thus the subject matter of a modern general staff school. In short, Frederick's *Quartiermeister* corps was the forerunner of the modern general staff.

5

The testimony relative to Steuben's further services in 1761 is both fragmentary and contradictory. Papers in the Prussian archives indicate that during the autumn he was assigned to the staff of Lieutenant General von Platen on the Russian front, serving directly under him or under one of his brigade commanders, Major General von Knobloch. Platen was under the command of Prince Frederick Eugene of Würtemberg, the commander in chief in the Baltic region.

According to Kapp, Steuben was Knobloch's adjutant when that general capitulated to the Russians at Treptow on October 25, 1761. Kapp says further that Steuben negotiated the terms of the capitulation; that with the rest of Knobloch's command he became a prisoner of war, was taken as a prisoner to St. Petersburg and was befriended by the Czar Peter III upon his accession to the throne; that he was invited to enter the Russian service, but preferred the Prussian service, and returned to Prussia with General von Knobloch upon the general exchange of prisoners—probably in April, 1762.

Kapp's account is partially confirmed by Steuben's father who writes that his son was captured by the Russians at Treptow and was subsequently taken to Russia, where he was befriended by the Czar. But the further details of the Kapp narrative are not confirmed by the records in the archives.

The records do show that Steuben was a prisoner of war at about that time. But his name is not with General Knobloch's in the official lists of prisoners who were captured in 1761 and returned from Russia in April, 1762. Perhaps the explanation of this is to be found in the fact that when Knobloch surrendered it was stipulated that his men should be interned on Prussian territory and not taken to Russia. It was also stipulated that his officers should retain their swords and be released on parole.[3] This may account for the fact that Steuben, though technically a prisoner of war, was not in the official lists of prisoners returned from Russia in the spring of 1762. If he was taken to St. Petersburg after the surrender of Treptow, his sojourn there was very brief, for, as we shall see presently, he was engaged in highly important duties at Königsberg early in January, 1762.

CHAPTER VII

STEUBEN AND FREDERICK THE GREAT

1

THE fortunes of Frederick the Great were at a low ebb at the end of the campaign of 1761. After more than five years of war his armies had been reduced to a total strength of 60,000 men. He had exhausted every means of recruiting them. He had fought the Austrians and the French to a standstill but the Russian hosts were overwhelming and ever growing. There was every prospect that his implacable enemy, the Czarina Elizabeth, would crush him in the campaign of 1762.

The King expected and prepared for the worst. On January 6, he wrote from Breslau to his minister, Finckenstein: "We ought now to think of preserving for my nephew, by way of negotiation, whatever fragments of my territory we can save from the avidity of my enemies." For himself, Frederick had resolved not to survive his final defeat. But even as he wrote, the whole situation had changed. On January 20 he wrote to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick: "The sky begins to clear. Courage, my dear fellow, I have received the news of a great event." This great event was the sudden death of the Czarina Elizabeth. She was succeeded by Peter III, the friend and ardent admirer of Frederick and of Prussia.

Who first sent this good news to Frederick? We do not know positively, but among the first tidings that reached him was the following dispatch from a young staff officer at Königsberg:

Most Serene Highness, most Mighty King!
Most Gracious King and Master!

Humbly I announce to your Royal Majesty the death of Her Majesty the Empress of Russia, which occurred on the sixth day of this month following a hemorrhage. Today the oath of allegiance will be pledged to His Majesty, the present Emperor, by the local administration and governors.

I remain in deepest reverence,

Your Majesty's
Most humble servant,
Von Steuben.

Königsberg,
January 12, 1762.[1]

After sending the foregoing dispatch to the King, Captain Steuben exerted himself to collect information about the new political situation in Russia. He was in a favorable position to do this, for Königsberg was a strategic point on the lines of communication between St. Petersburg and Holstein, then a Russian province. On the fifteenth, he sent a full report to Eichel, Frederick's minister at Breslau, inclosing a confidential memorandum to the King.[2] In these documents he gave the latest news from St. Petersburg. He also reported that he had established close relations with the Prince of Holstein-Gottorp, a kinsman of the new Czar, and with other Russian leaders then in the Baltic region. From these sources he was able to report the latest confidential news from St. Petersburg and to assure His Majesty that the new imperial government was favorably disposed toward peace with Prussia. He also took the initiative in establishing means for further communication between King Frederick and the new imperial court. Two days later, after the arrival of couriers from St. Petersburg, he sent another report to Eichel, giving him the latest developments in a most encouraging political situation.

2

THOUGH it cannot be definitely proved, there is good reason to believe that King Frederick received his first news of the fortunate revolution in Russia from Lieutenant von Steuben. Carlyle says that it reached him in Breslau on January 19. Steuben sent his first short letter from Königsberg on January 12. It is quite certain that his more circumstantial reports of the fifteenth contained intelligence of great value to the King and his ministers. Eichel wrote to Finckenstein, Frederick's minister at Magdeburg, on the twenty-fourth.[3] In order to give the best available light on the Russian situation and prospects, Eichel sent him copies of Steuben's letter and memorial of the fifteenth. Evidently the best news came through Königsberg and evidently the King found in Steuben not only an accurate reporter of events but an able staff officer full of intelligent political initiative in his behalf. This is fully confirmed by the following letter which was written by the King himself:

Be assured of my most gracious recognition for the news which you sent me on the occasion of the death of the late Empress of Russia, by means of your two letters of the twelfth and fifteenth of this month.

The friendly sentiments toward me which His Highness, the prince in question, has expressed, have especially touched me and obligated me to gratitude. I take great interest in his new fortune as well as in the happy succession to the throne of Their Majesties, the now-ruling Emperor and Empress. Their friendship and favorable sentiments toward me have always remained in my most grateful memory. And, for my part, I shall do my utmost to cultivate them and only wish to have the opportunity.[4]

Breslau, January 24, 1762.
To Brigade Major Captain von Steuben,
Lestwitz Regiment.

Two weeks later when his policy with reference to Russia had been settled the King again wrote to Steuben on an important affair of state:

To Quartiermeister Leutnant Capitän von Steuben.
Breslau, Feb. 8, 1762.

I flatter myself that you have duly received my two communications which at the end of last month were sent by way of Danzig properly addressed, and that the same, was the case with the two which I wrote to Legations Councilor von Korff and that they reached him before he left on his journey.

In this letter I wish only to inform you that within a day or two I shall send my adjutant, colonel, and actual chamberlain, Baron von der Goltz, to Petersburg to present my compliments to Their Majesties, the Czar and Czarina, on their fortunate succession to the throne, which has given me such great pleasure. He will go by way of Posen, Marienwärder and Königsberg. He would have been on his way several days ago had he not been delayed by the passports from the English minister at my court in Magdeburg which he had necessarily to wait for to insure his safe progress.

You may make this known there at all places where you think best and it would be very agreeable to me if you could write it immediately to the afore-mentioned Privy Councilor Korff at Petersburg, if possible by courier, for which I will reimburse you.

Since your two letters of January 12 and 15 reached me I have received nothing further from you. The continuance of your reports would have been very agreeable.[5]

Frederick.

In the foregoing letter, Captain von Steuben is called upon to further the progress of the new Prussian Embassy to Russia —probably the most fateful diplomatic enterprise in the history of Frederick the Great. The King not only intrusts him with an important state secret but instructs him to give it such publicity as he may think best in the public interest. Such a letter from a monarch to a junior officer is most unusual and indicates the King's confidence in his intelligence, fidelity and discretion. The whole correspondence tends to confirm the inference that when Steuben was "transferred" from his regiment in 1761, he became one of the *Quartiermeister Leutnante* attached to the royal headquarters.

3

STEUBEN spent the spring of 1762 in St. Petersburg. Just when he left Königsberg is unknown. It is probable that he went to Russia with Colonel von der Goltz, the new Prussian envoy, early in March.[6] In any case, it is clear that he remained there until the middle of May as an attaché of the Prussian Embassy.

We have few details of his life at the Russian court. His father says that the new Czar received him graciously and with distinction.[7] As an officer in the Prussian ambassador's suite, he must have enjoyed the favor of Peter III and his consort, the Czarina Catherine, later to be known as Catherine the Great. With his unusual social gifts, Steuben must have been a popular and active figure in the brilliant social life of the new imperial court. The new Emperor was almost insanely pro-Prussian. He was a worshiper of Frederick the Great and was most gracious and hospitable to all of his officers. But there is nothing in the Prussian archives to indicate that Steuben played anything more than a subordinate part in the important political negotiations then pending between Prussia and Russia. He was in St. Petersburg when the peace was signed by the Czar, but he returned to King Frederick's headquarters before the Treaty of Alliance was negotiated.

4

FROM an old magazine article we have the following glimpse of Steuben during his sojourn at the Russian Court: "During the short reign of Peter III, along with Count (now Colonel) Schwerin, who had the same rank and the same fate, he played a tragi-comic [*komisch-hohe*] role which almost became dangerous for them."[8]

I have sought diligently, but in vain, to find more details of this *komisch-hohe* adventure. It is known that on March 24, the King sent his aide-de-camp, Count Schwerin, to Russia with a letter to the Czar.[9] Schwerin arrived in St. Petersburg with the King's letter about April 7 and remained there until early in May when he returned to Prussia with the treaty of peace. For about a month then, Schwerin and Steuben were free to enjoy the delights of the youthful Catherine's court. Here was ample time and place for two merry young officers to carry out their komisch-hohe adventure, whatever it was. The old magazine refers to it as if it were a well-known and interesting bit of gossip in its day, but what it was has not descended to us.

Steuben finally left St. Petersburg on May 16. On the twenty-ninth he reported to King Frederick at Breslau, bearing a personal letter from the Czar. The King wrote to Goltz on May 30: "I send you enclosed herewith my reply to the letter from the Emperor which Steuben brought me."[10]

In June, Peter III made an offensive and defensive alliance with Prussia. In July he was murdered and the Empress Catherine reigned alone.

5

AFTER his return from Russia Steuben served for a time at the royal headquarters. He said repeatedly to his American friends and in his writings that he was one of King Frederick's aides-de-camp. Kalkhorst and Stöbe deny this because there is no record of such an appointment in the archives of the Prussian Army. Stöbe attempts to discredit it further by citing the well-established fact that Count Anhalt was Frederick's aide-de-camp at that time. This, however, proves nothing as the records also show that the King had at least two other aides-de-camp, Schwerin and Gaudy.

We can never accept the Baron's unsupported statement when he refers to his life in Europe, but in this case every bit of contemporary evidence confirms him. His father, an officer of honorable standing in the Prussian Army, testifies that upon his son's return from Russia, he was appointed aide-de-camp to the King.[11] Major von Steuben wrote this shortly after the war and eleven years before his son went to America. As the major was then an officer on the active list of the Prussian Army, he could hardly have risked circulating a false statement of his son's relations with the King.

After the Baron became famous in America, and while he was still living, two German magazines independently published articles stating that he was one of the King's aides-de-camp.[12] The distinguished scholar, Professor Christoph Daniel Ebeling of the University of Göttingen, in a brief biography written shortly after the Baron's death, makes the same statement, after citing and reviewing the above-named contemporary authorities.[13] The appointment, therefore, appears to be fully established by competent and independent contemporary witnesses, notwithstanding the absence of confirmation in the archives. The mere absence of a record of a fact does not disprove the fact. It may only prove that the fact was not recorded or that a portion of the record has been lost or destroyed. Many things happen at an army headquarters in time of war that are not preserved in the archives.

6

STEUBEN was a member of the special class in military art which was formed by the King at the end of the Seven Years' War.[14] This class comprised thirteen selected officers who had shown exceptional military ability in the field during the war. Among them was Count von Anhalt, the King's *Quartiermeister General* and adjutant, as well as Captain Frederick William von Steuben, *Quartiermeister Leutnant.* The King himself was the sole instructor of this class. He had organized it as a means of transmitting his military system and the fruits of his experience to the military leaders of the future. It was his conception that young officers of exceptional professional ability should be set apart and trained in the technique of generalship. They would thus be prepared to practice the art of troop leading as generals' assistants in their youth; and would be generals in fact, and not merely in name, when they should finally attain high rank. This royal class was the germ of the higher military education in Prussia. It was the forerunner of the *Kriegs Akadamie.* Steuben may thus be regarded as a charter member of the Great General Staff. This gives an explanation of his peculiar fitness for his American career which is not generally understood. He gave to Washington the services of an educated General Staff officer, more than a century before Elihu Root conceived the need for a special system of General Staff education in the American Army.

So Steuben emerged from the Seven Years' War. He was still in his thirty-third year. He did not win the command of a regiment as he had so confidently promised his friend, Count von Donnersmark, but he had achieved something much greater. He had attained the highest recognition of professional standing then known in the military world. The future lay bright before him. He had only to follow the normal course of his profession. He could now look forward with assurance to high rank in the Prussian Army.

CHAPTER VIII

OUT OF THE ARMY

1

NOTWITHSTANDING Steuben's fine record and prospects, fortune suddenly forsook him. Shortly after the Peace of Hubertusburg, the King dropped him summarily from his army. The circumstances attending this sudden wreck of his life prospects are but little known. The accounts given in the German periodicals during his lifetime are both vague and conflicting. After examining all of them, and while many of Steuben's contemporaries were still living, Ebeling wrote as follows:

> After the general peace was concluded, Steuben left the Prussian service. The occasion for this was some dissensions into which he fell with Count von Anhalt, who was aide-de-camp along with him. Presumably these were connected with the fact that he was assigned to a company in the Salmüth Regiment which was in garrison at Wesel. He felt slighted because he considered this no suitable reward for his long and faithful services.[1]

Kapp also mentions a report to the effect that Steuben actually had a duel with Anhalt. This is not improbable, but no authority is given for the suggestion.

2

EBELING's account is partially confirmed by such limited information as can be found in the archives. On March 1, 1763, the following order was issued from the royal headquarters at Dahlen:

> His Majesty the King has been most graciously pleased to appoint, under this date, Major and Aide-de-camp von Gaudy to command the Regiment von Salmüth, and upon his arrival at the

regiment, he will enroll Captain von Steuben, already stationed with the regiment, as staff captain.[2]

We thus find that Steuben was actually serving with the Salmüth Regiment shortly after the peace. It is also known that this regiment was in garrison at Wesel on the lower Rhine, a disagreeable and undesirable station. He had evidently been relieved from duty at the royal headquarters. He is no longer referred to as *Quartiermeister Leutnant* or aide-de-camp. Instead of receiving the promotion which he expected, he was demoted to staff captain in a garrison regiment.

The archives give us but little more. Under date of August 10, 1763, the Secret War Chancellery informed the Regiment von Salmüth of the discharge of a number of officers in connection with the demobilization after the war. In this list the name of Steuben appears. The date of discharge appears to have been April 29, 1763. The rank lists for the Salmüth Regiment from February to July are missing. In the August list, Major von Gaudy is mentioned, but not Steuben. Steuben's name appears on the retirement list of the regiment made at the beginning of August.[3] His age is given as thirty-six years* and his residence, Berlin.

Many years later Steuben referred to his service in the Prussian Army and his retirement as follows:

> Soon my commanders and my thoughtful King took notice of me and preferred me. Of my service in the Seven Years' War I have no reason to be ashamed. At the close of this war an inconsiderate step and the rancor of an implacable enemy frustrated my expectation of an appropriate reward. To say it in one word, I found myself compelled to quit the Prussian service.[4]

The implacable enemy may well have been the Count von Anhalt mentioned by Ebeling. Anhalt was at the head of the royal headquarters; Steuben was a junior staff officer under him. Anhalt was *Quartiermeister General;* Steuben was one of several assistant *Quartiermeister.* Anhalt was royal aide-de-camp in chief; Steuben was one of several junior aides-de-camp.

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* His actual age at that time was 33 years, 10½ months.

Anhalt was a powerful and ruthless enemy. He was one of the numerous illegitimate children of Prince William Gustave of Dessau, and was therefore the grandson of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, famous as the "old Dessauer." Through his undoubted military efficiency, he stood high in the old King's favor and dominated his military headquarters. He was a martinet and bully with brutal and tyrannical manners. By his rudeness to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, the victor of Minden, he forced even that distinguished general to leave the Prussian service. The enmity of such a man close to the King might well appear to a young officer as an insuperable obstacle to preferment.

If Anhalt was the "implacable enemy," what was Steuben's "inconsiderate step?" We do not know. Perhaps, as Kapp suggests, it was a challenge to a duel. But any one of a hundred indiscretions might have been sufficient—none of them serious in itself, but any one of them a sufficient pretext in the hands of a powerful enemy. Add to this that the King was now demobilizing his army as ruthlessly as he had formerly waged war. He was rapidly discharging his troops and many worthy officers who had served him for years were thrown out on the world without reward and with no provision for the future. Frederick's heartless ingratitude in this respect is well known. It is the theme of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm.* The hero of that drama, the gallant *Major von Tellheim,* was also summarily discharged by the King.

The war was over and Frederick was now busy with the restoration of his finances. His plan of demobilization was clear and he was glad to leave all details of the business to Anhalt. In such circumstances an Anhalt could easily contrive means of driving an enemy from the service. For example, he could procure him an undesirable station such as Wesel on the lower Rhine. This might provoke an impulsive officer to tender his resignation. If so, he could advise the King to accept it. And

Steuben of all men would be an easy victim. He was always impulsive. He was never provident or calculating.

But whatever the cause,* Steuben was now out of the army. He was penniless and in debt; without resources and with no other career to turn to. From childhood to the prime of manhood he had given his life to the service of his King in arms. Here was poor guidance for any other vocation. Such a catastrophe would be tragic even in our day. But conditions are different in the twentieth century. After the recent World War, when many German officers were forced to give up their swords, there were new careers in the professions and in the business world that were not open to impoverished gentlemen in the eighteenth century. Add to this that Steuben suffered the pain of a profound humiliation and the sting of ingratitude for benefit forgot. It also appears from a letter to be presented later (page 56) that he became an exile from Prussia. After dropping him from his army, the King probably ordered him out of his kingdom. At any rate, so far as I can discover, he never revisited his native land. I have found nothing to indicate that he ever saw his father and mother again.

---

* Stöbe argues plausibly, though in my opinion not conclusively, that Steuben was dropped because Frederick had recently discovered that his claim to noble descent was spurious.

CHAPTER IX

HECHINGEN

1

WE have little knowledge of Steuben's life during the year following his discharge from the Prussian Army. In one of the memoirs written years later in America, he says:

> In the year 1763, after the Peace of Hubertusburg, I left the service of the King of Prussia where I was a Colonel. The same year I took a journey to Hamburg, where I got acquainted with the Count de St. Germain, then in the service of Denmark. Towards the end of the year I went to Suabia where I had an estate between the Territories of Baden and Würtemburg.
>
> My fortune not being sufficient to support me according to my rank, my intention was to enter the service of the King of Sardinia from whom I had received generous offers. But upon the recommendation of Prince Henry of Prussia, the Prince of Hohenzollern conferred on me the office of Grand Marshall of his Court with a salary of 1200 German florins.[1]

The foregoing passages will show how futile it is to rely on the Baron's own reminiscences. We have seen that he was never a colonel in the Prussian Army. It is also quite certain that the discharged captain had no estate to retire to in Suabia or elsewhere. The explanation of this false autobiography has already been given in the Prologue. When the Baron wrote it he was writing, not his own reminiscences, but the fictitious reminiscenses of the well-to-do General von Steuben who went to America with letters from Benjamin Franklin. He did, however, meet the Count de St. Germain at about this time, quite possibly in Hamburg, and this proved to be a fateful event in his life. In 1763, St. Germain was a distinguished French general in the service of the King of Denmark. Fourteen years later he was the French Minister of War who commended Steuben to Franklin as the man of the hour so vitally needed in America.

It is also probably true that Steuben sought employment in the Austrian as well as in the Sardinian Army. That was the natural and proper thing for an unemployed professional soldier of the eighteenth century to do. But he probably had no "generous offers" of a place in either service. If he had had such an opportunity to resume his own profession it is incredible that he should have rejected it. It is also true that some time in 1764 he became "Grand Marshal" at the court of the Prince of Hohenzollern—but not upon the recommendation of Prince Henry of Prussia.

2

Two old German magazine articles throw further light on Steuben's visit to Suabia. One of them tells us, on the authority of his sister, that he visited Wildbad and that "during his sojourn at that watering place, through the intercession of the Princess of W—— he was offered the place of chief minister [*Hofmarschall*] at the court of Hohenzollern-Hechingen."[2] Who was the mysterious princess who thus became Steuben's fairy godmother? The other article enables us to guess at the answer: "In 1764, he went to Suabia with Prince Frederick of Württemberg who, at that time, was still in the Prussian service."[3] Through his researches in the archives of Hohenzollern-Hechingen, Zingeler pieces out the rest of the story.[4] The "Princess of W——" proves to be the Princess Frederica of Württemberg. She was a niece of Frederick the Great and the wife of Prince Frederick Eugene of Württemberg. Her husband was a distinguished general in the Prussian Army during the Seven Years' War and had been severely wounded. In 1764, still suffering from his wounds, he sought relief at Wildbad, a popular watering place in the Black Forest region. His young wife, "The Princess of W——," accompanied him. Among the other guests at Wildbad was Joseph Frederick William, the reigning Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. Steuben also was at Wildbad, probably as the guest of the Prince of Württemberg. He had served as a staff officer in one of the subdivisions of the prince's army during the campaign on the Russian front in 1761, and was well known to him as a gallant soldier and an able officer. With his charming manners and social graces we may be sure that he cut a good figure at the gay old watering place. And no doubt he won the sympathy of his host and hostess and of his Serene Highness of Hohenzollern. King Frederick was their kinsman. They all knew his brutal selfishness and pity was mingled with their liking for the young soldier.

3

So, during this visit to Wildbad, Steuben was appointed chief minister or chamberlain at the court of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. That he indeed owed this appointment to the "Princess of W——" is clearly established by the following letter from her uncle, Prince Henry of Prussia:

To Captain Steuben,
Theinach.
Honorable Captain:

From your letter of September 17 I see with pleasure that you have found an appointment with the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen upon the recommendation of my niece, Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Württemberg. I herewith send you the testimonial addressed to the prince which you requested. I hope that it will contribute to your welfare.

I remain always, my dear Captain

Your most affectionate friend,
Henry.

Rheinsberg, Nov. 18, 1764.[5]

On December 8, Steuben wrote a letter of gratitude to his patroness. This letter cannot be found, but on the last day of the year she replied:

Noble Captain:

From your letter of the eighth of this month, I have taken note of the regard you express for me, and for this I am obliged to you. I also learn that you are well pleased with your present situation. This was welcome news to me. I shall always be glad to hear that you are well and faring as you deserve. I shall, whenever occasion offers, contribute to your happiness. Assuring you of my everlasting esteem and friendship, I remain, dear Captain,

Your devoted friend,
Friederike von Württemberg.

Treptow, on the Rega.
Dec. 31, 1764.[6]

The Princess Sophie Dorothea Frederica of Württemberg was the favorite niece of Frederick the Great. Her mother, Princess Sophie Dorothea Maria, Margravine of Schwedt, was the King's fourth sister. Princess Frederica exchanged other friendly letters with Steuben and continued his friend and patroness. She was an attractive woman about five years his junior. That summer they were at Wildbad, Steuben was thirty-four and his "fairy godmother" was twenty-nine.

From the foregoing correspondence we find that Steuben was installed at Hechingen some time before September 17, 1764, his thirty-fourth birthday. He retained that office until the spring of 1777, a few months before his departure for America. He became the trusted friend as well as the faithful servant of the reigning prince and his consort, the Princess Maria Theresa. His gratitude and loyalty to them are revealed in the following draft of a letter in the archives at Hechingen:

Noble Count:
Highly honored General:*

Highly as I prize the trust which Your Excellency is pleased to place in me, I cannot conceal from Your Excellency that the serious prosecution by petition of the claims which Your Excellency believes himself to have upon the duchy of Scher places me in a most embarrassing position.

Your Excellency can be assured that my great respect for you and my friendship for your sons make me wish you every good thing, but it is not unknown to you that my adverse fate forced me to leave my country, my friends and my support and perhaps renounce them for life. So you will see for yourself how much my gratitude binds me to a prince, who without even knowing me, graciously grants me an honorable abiding place, in a most magnanimous manner at this court.

---

* There is no record as to whom this letter was sent.

Since, then, I should act contrary to duty and conscience in making even a step detrimental to my master or his relatives, and since my princess is a daughter of the House of Wurzach, I ask Your Excellency to consider how far I could mix in a matter that could have even the appearance of dissatisfaction with the relatives of my princess.

Now, since I did not wish to offend my duty or conscience, I have communicated Your Excellency's letter to Her Grace, my princess, and begged her gracious advice in answering the same.

As much as I should be pleased to see Your Grace here, I must beg Your Excellency to spare me henceforth with these family affairs. The matter becomes too serious for me. I am a good soldier, a poor courtier and a miserable lawyer. Therefore my awkwardness must serve me as excuse in this affair even if I had no further scruple about undertaking any injurious step against the relatives of my princess who shows me so much favor. Were you in my position would you act differently?

I remain with respect, etc.[7]

CHAPTER X

A KNIGHT OF FIDELITY

1

WHEN Steuben took the position of court chamberlain, conditions in Hohenzollern-Hechingen were far from prosperous. The princely house was in serious financial difficulties. The little principality had been in a bankrupt condition for more than a century. The hereditary dignity of the court far outweighed its revenues. The reigning prince, though a fine old gentleman and a gallant soldier, was far from being an able man. He did something to improve the neglected agriculture of his domain. But his temperament was oversanguine, and according to Zingeler, he relied upon speculation rather than thrift to restore his fortunes. An ill-considered wine monopoly not only failed to make him rich but made him enemies. He tried his hand at lead and iron mining and lost money by both. He even listened to one of the plausible alchemists of his day and wasted good gold in seeking to manufacture the precious metal by transmutation from lead.[1]

Steuben's position as chief minister under these conditions was not an easy one. With the limited revenues available it was difficult for him to manage the affairs of the court and the princely household. It was no part of his duty to provide funds, but it was essentially his duty to strive to keep expenditures within the bounds of the revenues. Although never a good manager of his own business affairs, Steuben was an able public economist. This he was to reveal later as inspector general of the American Army. There his system of property returns and inspections saved thousands of dollars for the government.

A contemporary tells us that he was also a popular minister:

> He filled his office with all that dignity, orderliness, and fine diligence in business which it demands; gained the entire confidence of his prince and made many friends as well at his court as at the

> neighboring courts. He was amiable, condescending towards those in lower stations, strict and exacting towards those under him when it was a question of order and the fulfillment of their duty.
>
> He was obliging, kindly. He aimed to spare his master every annoyance, which even the great ones of the earth cannot always escape in their inner family life. Therefore he sought to remove everything which could give fuel to the fire of his prince's temper, disposed of everything quietly, admonished and punished in secret. Thereby he gained general respect, good will and love.[2]

This is an excerpt from an old newspaper article published in 1784, after Steuben had become famous in America. The anonymous reporter had been sent to Hechingen to interview the Baron's former associates.

2

THOUGH no longer in the army, Steuben kept in touch with his old military friends. In the archives at Hechingen are letters from a former comrade in the Lestwitz Regiment, Captain von Lüttwitz.[3] After the romantic fashion of the time, the captain addresses Steuben as Orestes, and refers to himself as Pylades. In one of these letters, Pylades-Lüttwitz says:

> Amiable and eternally appreciated friend. I received your first and second missives with infinite pleasure, especially the first, because for a long time I have impatiently waited for good news from you. I certainly should have replied at once if you had not intimated that you must accompany your prince to Vienna and would not return before the close of April. . . .
>
> You know me too well to feel that my friendship for you could ever become lukewarm. My dear Orestes, your Pylades loves you as loyally as he has ever loved you. His friendship to you knows no change. Not the remotest distance can diminish it. No wonder, since I have to do with a friend who more than once has stood the severest test and under all circumstances has acted as is demanded by the ideal of true and loyal friendship.

In an earlier letter Lüttwitz gives us glimpses of eighteenth-century garrison life.

I have an excellent billet in which, strange to say, there is a very pretty girl. She is the daughter of the chief administrator. You know how I enjoy the society of girls. I sit and play all day with my little Caroline. We have nothing else to do, but I am very pious and she is very virtuous. Boritz sends you a thousand greetings. He is well, but every day he gets outrageously drunk. He no longer knows what it is to go to bed sober.

It appears that Lüttwitz and other officers, as well as the bibulous Boritz, did some earnest drinking at times. Altogether they must have been a thirsty and good-natured crew. Captain Pylades continues:

How were it possible that a Lüttwitz, a Pylades, could forget his duty and respond with indifference to the friendship of his Orestes. . . . Lieutenant von Kloch has married Miss Rungen who had that affair with Lieutenant von Garde, and in consequence of this he has been cashiered. But her father gave her 40,000 thalers immediately with a prospect of 80,000 more after his death. His brother, the captain, has also married. . . . His wife is the widow of the sheriff, Studinitzen. Her portion is 24,000 Staat thalers. She is a Catholic and it is said he will also become one. He is a very much henpecked husband, but that does not appear to disturb his phlegmatic disposition.

Captain von Wildau is engaged to Miss Hoffman, a niece of the merchant, Grebin. She will have 10,000 thalers and is very good looking. . . . Friend Tschierchky is in quarters. He sends you a million greetings. Grevewitz is well, I believe. He will himself write you. . . . All the officers in the regiment send their regards and wish you luck. . . . Once more be assured of my eternal friendship. I will cherish yours above all things and all my life, with greatest pleasure, I will call myself my Steuben's truest friend.

Lüttwitz.

Unfortunately, none of the replies from Orestes-Steuben are to be found.

While Hofmarschall von Steuben is reading the news of his old friends, many of whom are married or about to marry, we may note that he is well past thirty and still a bachelor. Indeed he never married and there is no direct trace of a love affair or engagement to be found in any of the old manuscripts. There is some reason to believe that he was disappointed in love early in life. According to Kapp, when he was preparing to move from New York to his country estate in the upper Mohawk Valley, the miniature portrait of a young woman accidentally fell from his cabinet. A friend picked it up and asked him who she was. The Baron was overcome by emotion. He only said, "She was a matchless woman."[4]

3

THE portraits of Baron von Steuben all show him with the brilliant badge of an order of knighthood upon his breast. This decoration was the Star of the Order of Fidelity (*Hausorden der Treue*), which was founded by William, Margrave of Baden-Durlach in the year 1715. Steuben was received into this order on May 26, 1769, while he was still chamberlain at the neighboring court of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. In the archives at Karlsruhe there is a letter in German, dated June 1, from Steuben to Privy Councilor Johann Ernst Buercklin, the secretary of the order, which begins as follows:

> I have received your highly esteemed letters of May 29th and 30 with much pleasure. For all your care and trouble I express my deepest gratitude. The special distinction which His Highness, the Margrave, has been pleased to show me, and for which I have already sent my unworthy thanks, is the more valued because I shall have the honor of being more nearly acquainted with Your Excellency.
>
> I surmise that the order is already in the hands of Her Royal Highness, and that it is the gracious intention of His Highness, the Margrave, that I should receive it from the exalted hands of the princess. Until today, my health has prevented my making the journey to Wildbad there to receive the favor of your high-born master.[5] . . .

As his health was now sufficiently restored, we may assume that immediately after signing the foregoing letter, the candidate for knighthood mounted his steed and set out for Wildbad. It was a ride of thirty-odd miles from Hechingen. There he must have received the accolade from his patroness, and her fair hands must have fixed the Star of Fidelity upon his breast. For the high lady referred to in the letter was his faithful friend, the Princess Frederica. The record of his installation as a Knight of the Order of Fidelity is in the archives of Baden at Karlsruhe. The document bears the endorsement: "Accomplished through the high intercession of the Consort of His Serene Highness, Prince Frederick of Württemberg."[6]

When and where Steuben first met his protectress we do not know. We have seen that he was a member of her party at Wildbad the summer of 1764, when she procured him his appointment at Hechingen. In May, 1769, her husband, no longer in the Prussian Army, resumed his permanent residence in Württemberg. That same month the princess was again at Wildbad and early in June Steuben went to Wildbad to receive the Star of Fidelity from her hands. She had made her protégé prime minister at Hechingen and now, five years later, she has procured for him an honorable order of knighthood. Whether he ever saw her between the summer of 1764 and 1769 we do not know. But Carlyle gives us one glimpse of her during that interval through the eyes of Frederick the Great. On December 1, 1766, the King wrote to Marie-Antoine, the Electress of Saxony:

> At present I have with me my niece, the Duchess of Württemberg, who remembers with pleasure to have had the happiness of seeing Your Royal Highness in former times. She is very unhappy and much to be pitied. Her husband gives her a deal of trouble. He is a violent man from whom she has everything to fear, who gives her chagrins and makes her no allowances. I try my best to bring him to reason.[7]

After their return to Württemberg in 1769, the prince and princess resided part of the time at Stuttgart and part at Mümpelgard. Many years later the prince became the reigning

Duke of Württemberg. Their eldest daughter was the second wife of Czar Paul II and became the ancestress of all the later czars. I have found no record of any correspondence between Steuben and his patroness after he received the Star of Fidelity from her hands. Could she have been the "matchless woman" of the miniature portrait?

4

BEFORE Steuben could qualify as a Knight of Fidelity, he was required by the statutes of the order to submit a family tree showing his noble descent. In order that he might comply with this regulation, his father, Major von Steuben, sent him a copy of the pedigree which he had concocted in 1766.[8] It gives all of the Baron's progenitors back to the thirty-two of the sixth generation. Among these noble forefathers is his fictitious great-grandfather, Ludwig von Steube, Knight of St. John, the essential link between the plebeian Augustin and the ancient house of Steuben. From this table Frederick William prepared a revised copy which he submitted to the chancellery of the Order of Fidelity and which is now in the archives at Karlsruhe.[9]

At the top of the Baron's copy of the pedigree are his sixteen great-great-grandparents. The names of their thirty-two parents were evidently not required by the statutes. He retained, of course, the indispensable Ludwig, Knight of St. John, but he enlarged the dignity of his own grandfather, Augustin. Major von Steuben had been content to endow Parson Steube with the lordship of Ens. The Baron also conferred the lordship of Gerbstaedt upon him.

While thus polishing his pedigree, Steuben also improved the opportunity to change his own Christian name. Major von Steuben, in his version of the pedigree, gave his son the name that he received at the baptismal font, namely: FREDERICK WILLIAM LUDOLF GERHARD AUGUSTIN. But the Baron edited it to the more euphonious and imposing FREDERICK WILLIAM AUGUSTUS HENRY FERDINAND. It was this more sonorous name that he filed with the chancellery of the Order of Fidelity and bore for the rest of his life.

When Steuben received the title of baron is unknown. In the archives of Hohenzollern-Hechingen there is an official court list for the year 1771. Here Steuben's name appears next after the members of the princely family as:

"Chamberlain, Frederick, Baron von Steuben, Knight of the Order of Fidelity."[10]

The Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen, in his own capacity, as one of the sovereigns of the Holy Roman Empire, may have conferred the title of baron upon his chief minister; or he may have procured it for him from the imperial court.

CHAPTER XI

THE MONTPELLIER MASQUERADE

1

AS time went on the financial situation at Hechingen went from bad to worse. Finally, in 1771, the prince determined upon a heroic remedy. He decided to disband his court and household and to live abroad for several years. To avoid the expensive dignity and ceremonial of his high rank he would travel as the Count de Hombourg and not as His Serene Highness, the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. The count and his family would reside at Montpellier in the south of France.

About New Year's, 1772, the prince bade farewell to the home of his fathers and set out on his travels. It was decided that the princess and her twelve-year-old daughter, the Countess Maria Antonia, should join him a few weeks later at Montpellier. He left a small staff of officials at Hechingen to transact the necessary business of the principality and to care for the family estates. At the head of these functionaries was the Baron's close friend, Daniel Marianus Frank, the chancellor. The personnel left at Hechingen was reduced to the minimum necessary for the conduct of public business and the supervision of the princely lands and forests. The princely household with its expensive hospitality and its train of ornamental retainers was disbanded.

But the chief minister, Baron von Steuben, did not remain in Hechingen. He alone of all the court was selected to accompany the prince in his self-imposed exile. During the journey, the Baron wrote frequently to Chancellor Frank, and a number of these letters are still preserved in the Hohenzollern archives.[1] As they give glimpses of Steuben and his environment in the forty-second year of his life, we will present some excerpts from them.

2

[Strassburg, Jan. 4, 1772.]
By yesterday's mail I announced to the princess our arrival at Strassburg. If things continue in this style there is no danger of our becoming homesick. The prince is in good humor and enjoys splendid health. . . . Yesterday I purchased a serviceable traveling carriage for the little princess. . . . Today the prince dines with the Marshal de Contade.

In his letter of January 24, Steuben gives his first impressions of Montpellier. Coming from winter weather in the Black Forest region, he was impressed by the bright sunshine of southern France. He was overwhelmed by the magnificent vista. To the southeast, about seven miles away, lay the Mediterranean; to his right the Pyrenees; to his left the distant Alps. On the other hand he was not favorably impressed by the narrow streets of the old city. At first, he could not find suitable quarters for his princely master. Says he:

I cursed the whole business. The count was so depressed he could hardly speak. I swore like a post-boy. . . . The count would have liked to swear too, but I gave him no chance. . . . I have written at least fifteen letters to our traveling ladies and to you. . . . I haven't had a line from anybody. As to our ladies, if today's mail does not bring us a packet, I shall be in more anxiety than I expressed to the count. . . .

[Jan. 29.] On the twenty-first of this month, our ladies had not yet reached Lyons. . . . In tomorrow's mail however we expect news of them. . . . Pleasant as our sojourn in this place seems to be, the happiest hour of my life will be when, after the realization of our plans, I shall be able to embrace you, my dearest friend. After that I shall be ready to die at Hechingen, even if my resting place should be in the Jewish Cemetery. . . .

[Feb 1.] [During the Carnival] Here my friend, you will probably be convinced of my French frivolity. Today I found on my desk the letter I wrote you four days ago. . . . I closed the pouch just after I had been entertaining some friends and by mistake your letter was left out. . . . The princess has not yet arrived. We only know that she left Strassburg the 21st. . . . I seldom go out except to the Comedy which I never neglect. Day before yesterday there was a ball at the Comedy House. . . . The count and I were invited formally by three cavaliers. The house was very prettily illuminated. Madam de Moncan, the governor's lady, and our count opened the ball to the sound of trumpets and kettle drums. . . . By the way, our incognito is a ridiculous masquerade. . . . May God grant that our princess will soon arrive in good health. . . .

3

[Feb. 12.] Our gracious princess with the gracious little lady and her suite have arrived. . . . I must admit that, so far, I cannot understand how this place has acquired such a flattering reputation throughout Europe. The most necessary victuals such as bread, veal, butter, lard, milk, venison, are of poor quality, dear, and sometimes not to be had. . . . Sea fish, oysters, mushrooms, olives and oranges, all are excellent and cheap. Wine, to say the truth, costs almost nothing. Mutton is first class. But you may judge for yourself that these delicacies do not appeal to a German stomach until it has been well-lined with good beef and sauerkraut. . . .

[Feb. 19.] Our young countess enjoys good health. But here we encounter our greatest difficulty. It is impossible to find as good teachers for her here as at Strassburg. . . . There too she had much better company and her household was less expensive. The princess is ready to send her back. The prince does not object seriously. In my opinion, we have a chance here to get rid of a great burden. . . .

[March 11.] . . . Our little countess and her suite returned to Strassburg on the eighth. There are 1,500 florins we might have saved. . . . I am glad they are gone. But this is confidential. . . . The return trip of the little countess has given us a painful financial shock. . . .

[March 25.] . . . We have come to the conclusion that France is solidly Catholic, and that they make a better distinction here between the essentials and the nonessentials of the Christian religion than we were ever aware of in Suabia.

Our resident bishop here is in every respect an ornament to the church. If we could acknowledge perfection in human beings, we

> could safely apply that predicate to this priest. Without pride, he wins everybody's reverence. He is erudite without self-love—so pious and unprejudiced that the Protestants of this place revere him as much as do the members of his own church. By descent he is a Vicomte de Durfort of the old ducal house of Duras.
>
> Two village parsons who recently wanted an audience with him arrived in the afternoon when we were just risen from the table. As soon as the bishop saw them, he requested permission from the prince and the other guests to exchange a few words privately with these priests. He took them by the hand and led them to the door of his cabinet where he urged them to enter before him. This the priests did with less hesitation than if this had been a merely empty form of courtesy. . . .

The foregoing comments are the more remarkable because Steuben was bred a Protestant. They reveal a broad tolerance and sympathy that was extraordinary at that time. The prince was a devout and orthodox Catholic. Steuben's intimacy with him was therefore most unusual. He was a Protestant official at the head of a Catholic court, the trusted and intimate friend of his prince. Most of the other retainers of the court, including a numerous clergy, were Catholics. Later these religious differences became a source of jealousy and intrigue.

In another letter to Frank:

> In my recent missives I have enlarged on the good humor of our gracious master. Lately, however, the chevalier* has ruffled his temper with his confounded lamentations. If this should continue I cannot guarantee that we might not arrive at Hechingen in a few days. But I am not included in this "we." In that event I'd rather cross the herring pond and betake myself to Africa. I am sure I could get along better with the pirates than with our eccentric chevalier.

About a year later Frank wrote to Steuben urging him to take over the money accounts of the princely family. This had apparently been the subject of earlier letters. The Baron replied emphatically as follows:

---

* The Chevalier St. Martin, one of the privy councilors left at Hechingen.

For the last time I say that under no circumstances will I take care of disbursements and accounts. Her Highness, the princess, immediately before our departure assumed this task. As for myself I am neither able nor willing to be encumbered with them. You know full well, my dearest friend, and I do not conceal it from anybody, that in the management of my own affairs I have always been and, to this very moment, still am careless. In these circumstances it would be ridiculous to load upon my shoulders the management of another, and by far more considerable, household.[2]

CHAPTER XII

BACK TO HECHINGEN

1

THE Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen remained in France for more than three years. His residence most of this time, and particularly during the winters, was at Montpellier. But he also lived part of the time at Lyons and at Strassburg. This long stay in France was an important period in Steuben's life. In his broadened outlook, the last vestiges of German provincialism disappeared. He became a cultivated man of the world as well as an accomplished courtier. Through the Count and Countess de Hombourg he enjoyed the best society. He met many distinguished men who spent their winters in the south of France. Among them he mentions the Prince de Montbarrey and two English noblemen, Lords Spencer and Warwick. He also renewed his acquaintance with the Count de St. Germain, who, having left the Danish service, had settled down on his estate in Alsace, near Strassburg.

While his residence in France was of great personal value to the Baron, it was a failure from the standpoint of public economy. The Count de Hombourg did not succeed in saving money for the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. As the Baron suggested in one of his letters to Frank, the incognito was an absurd masquerade. The prince was received and entertained as a prince and could not escape the burden of princely hospitality. Travel was so expensive that it offset all that was saved by the reduced establishment at home. And perhaps, also, Hofmarschall Steuben was more gifted as an agreeable traveling companion than as an adviser in domestic economy.

Finally in the summer of 1775 the experiment was abandoned as a failure. The prince and the Baron made a visit to Hechingen and from there both wrote to the princess. On August 24 she replied as follows from Strassburg:

> I have received, my best beloved prince, your letter and the one from Steuben. From both I see that I would give you great pleasure if I come home. After all our expenses, I find it is best to end our travels and to live quietly and simply at home in Hechingen, the sooner the better. Why continue the expense of our journeys? . . . If you agree I will put all my affairs here in order and then come home, bag and baggage. . . . I hope you will agree that we no longer maintain so much service, see no strangers and make no journeys. I will write to my kin that we wish to live simply, so that they will not visit us. And we will let it be known in the neighborhood that we wish to see no one. We will arrange the court household as simply as possible so that we can put our affairs in order. They have been a burden long enough. . . . We need fewer clothes and many other things at home that we cannot do without in the world. And so I am determined to come home to live quietly and happily and to use all my authority and firmness that neither my house nor the court household shall be as expensive as they were.
>
> At times it will be hard to have so little company at dinner. But for a few years we must economize. Let them say what they will. . . . Can we not be content when you and I and Steuben and Schilling and Hoeffel sit at the table? I will gladly be gay when I am not so worried, . . . with all my efforts thrown to the four winds, feeding so many people, buying so many horses, and entertaining so much.[1]

The letter is a long one. The princess writes as a wholesome German housewife and mother. She refers to her daughter's future and how their unsettled life had spoiled the young lady and disturbed her education. Whether she was able to carry out her sensible reforms we do not know. But it is certain that soon after she wrote her letter, the princely household was reëstablished at Hechingen. Steuben at this time was rounding out his forty-fifth year.

2

THE young countess, Maria Antonia, was approaching her fifteenth birthday that summer. As she was nearing the marriageable age the question of matchmaking became a serious affair of state. And this was not an easy problem in statecraft. She was of high birth and only the very great could aspire to her hand. But as she was not a rich princess, she was not a great catch in the matrimonial market.

This interesting and delicate situation was the subject of a letter to Steuben from Count Karl von Hohenzollern, the brother of the reigning prince. Count Karl was a distinguished Catholic ecclesiastic. He frequently corresponded with the Baron about intimate family matters. Referring to the young countess he wrote:

> I am charmed to have news of my good and dear niece, but at the same time your unfavorable report of the prospective bridegrooms distresses me. You know (when we finally have to decide between the two aspirants) it will really be a question of choosing the lesser of two evils. . . . The divorce of the Prince of S—— does not surprise me, for you know the old adage—"When the name of lover is exchanged for that of husband, love loses its greatest sweetness." . . .
>
> Many compliments to Monsieur de Schilling. I have given him my most hearty congratulations upon his marriage. According to the old proverb, "It is a lucky man who takes a bride to his home." However, I prefer my bride [the Church] to all the wives in Europe, Africa, Asia and America.[2]

The foregoing letter was written from Potsdam where Count Karl was high in the favor of Frederick the Great. He was awaiting preferment in the Church. He wrote to Steuben with the utmost frankness in regard to his prospects:

> You inquire how many bishoprics my august master will have at his disposal. There will be three. The first in Breslau. I don't know just what revenues it has but it is the best. The present bishop is sixty years old and has had the sleeping sickness for about a year. Otherwise he is tolerably well. The second is the see of Warny, with about 24,000 crowns a year. This bishop is younger than I am and enjoys perfect health. The third is the see of Culm, which is the least desirable, with only about six thousand crowns.[3]

In the meantime, Count Karl waited patiently and philosophically. He remained at Potsdam and a letter to Steuben shows that he frequently had the honor of dining with the King. This proves conclusively that he was a good fellow, for King Frederick did not permit himself to be bored even by his cousins. Finally good fortune came and Count Karl became Prince Bishop of Ermeland.

3

OTHER fragments of Steuben's correspondence are preserved in the Hohenzollern archives. Among his close friends was a Colonel Zanthier, a German officer in the French Army. Zanthier wrote a friendly letter from his garrison in Corsica while Steuben was living at Montpellier. Later Zanthier commanded the Alsace Regiment at Strassburg. Another of the Baron's correspondents was his friend Edelsheim, a high official at the Court of Baden.

Enough of Steuben's letters are preserved to show that he had a wide circle of friends. Later he was to become one of the most popular and picturesque figures in American public life. Throughout his career he had an unusual genius for winning affection. But he was much more than a courtier. His friends were not only among the great. He was beloved by the private soldiers of the Continental Army as well as by Washington and Greene and Hamilton. He inspired the confidence and affection of all sorts and conditions of men. This amiable human trait runs through all of his correspondence.

CHAPTER XIII

BRIGADIER HAHN

1

SHORTLY after the return of the court to Hechingen, we find Steuben making serious efforts to secure employment elsewhere. Ever since his retirement from the Prussian Army, he had hoped to resume the military life. But apparently he never found an opening equal to his pretensions as an experienced Prussian veteran trained in the staff methods of Frederick the Great. While at Lyons he made friends with Philip Howard, Esquire, of Corby Castle, Cumberland, and through him sought employment in the army of the East India Co. Upon his return to England, Howard wrote him that under the existing policy it would be impossible for a foreigner to enter the company's military service under satisfactory conditions.[1] So Steuben missed serving under Warren Hastings and was saved for Washington.

During the early years of his Hechingen service, the Baron's military aspirations were more or less in the background. He would have accepted a military engagement with suitable rank and pay, but he was content with his life at the princely court and would not have exchanged it for any ordinary appointment. But after his return to Hechingen the situation changed. According to Zingeler, the state of the Hohenzollern finances impelled him to look elsewhere for employment.

There appears to be no record in the Hohenzollern archives as to Steuben's salary. In the year 1771, Chancellor Frank received 600 florins (about $300) with certain provisions in kind. Steuben probably received little, if any, more. He had his lodging and board in the princely household and probably his necessary personal expenses were paid by the prince. No doubt there were certain perquisites attached to his office. A courtier in that day also received occasional gratuities from his sovereign. But these must have been very small and very infrequent at the court of Hechingen, especially after the return from Montpellier.

2

TOWARD the end of the year 1775 Steuben entered into a prolonged correspondence, directed toward entering the French military service. Among his friends was Brigadier Hahn of the French Army, serving in the garrison at Strassburg. On December 31 Hahn wrote the Baron a long letter, urging him to induce his prince to authorize the recruitment of a regiment for the French Army in Hohenzollern-Hechingen.[2] This was not an unusual proposal, as there were several German regiments then in the French Army.

Hahn was evidently writing in behalf of some higher authority. He suggested that the prince would receive 12,000 livres per year as the proprietary colonel but that he would not be expected to serve in person. Steuben would be the actual colonel and would likewise receive a salary of 12,000 livres. Hahn himself would be commissioned in the regiment and would serve under the Baron. This presented an attractive financial prospect to Steuben as well as to his prince. Hahn also hinted that there would be valuable perquisites in addition to the salary. He could not give the details of this in writing, but he assured the Baron that he would see him later in person and explain an opportunity to clear up about 50,000 francs in the deal.

The correspondence continued for several weeks. Steuben's letters to Hahn are not preserved. But there is a rough retained draft of one of them in the archives at Hechingen.[3] In this draft, the Baron remarks that he is very sympathetic to the plan; that he would rejoice to be a soldier again as the sword had been taken from his hand after the Peace of Hubertusburg. He suggests that the Prince of Hohenzollern would have no objection to having a French regiment named for him and points out that there would be advantages on both sides. With refer-

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ence to recruiting in Germany he observes that the prince would not be able to recruit a whole regiment in his small territory. The larger states of the Empire, such as Austria, Prussia and the secular electorates, would not permit recruiting for the French Army. It would therefore be necessary to count upon the coöperation of the inferior princes and cities of the Empire. The whole letter discloses the decadent state of Germany at that time. Steuben, like most of his contemporaries, had little conception of a united German nation.

The correspondence still dragged along. Finally Hahn wrote from Strassburg that he had transmitted the business to Paris where it would be brought to the attention of Count de St. Germain, the new minister of war. There were long delays, St. Germain was taken sick, no answer came and Hahn finally advised Steuben that he had given up hope.

3

THEN the correspondence took a new turn. Hahn was disappointed that his military scheme should fall through. He had expected to make his own fortune by it as well as Steuben's. But the correspondence gives the impression that the brigadier considered Steuben's need of money as much more pressing than his own. He was evidently determined to make the Baron's fortune one way or another. If he could not get him a lucrative job, he might find him a rich wife. So on June 4, 1776, the brigadier wrote from Strassburg:

> . . . I no longer dare think of our military project. . . . Let us now speak of an affair that is much more solid than that. . . .
>
> A gentleman in this neighborhood has just made a very profitable marriage. . . . He has espoused a lady with whom he will one day have 400,000 francs in property. She is Mlle. de Goll, daughter of the President of Montpeillard. This marriage suggests to M. de Bayer and me very considerable and important prospects for you, my dear Baron. The aforesaid president has property worth from 1,500,000 to 2,000,000. He has [besides a young son] another marriageable daughter. . . .

I do not speak to you of her person, as I do not know her; but if she resembles her sister, who is here, there will be compliments for whoever wins her. As your position today is not very solid, . . . M. de Bayer and I would suggest to you whether we should not make proposals in your behalf for the other girl. De Bayer is firmly convinced that you will have no difficulty in getting her, since her father only seeks a man of birth and merit and a gentleman—in all of which we can vouch for you. . . . Everybody assures me that each child will have property worth at least 400,000 francs upon the death of the parents.

If these advantages appeal to you, I would beg you, my dear Baron, to let me know. We will then . . . sound the brother and sister who are established here. . . . One doesn't always find 500,000 francs in a marriage. But it is also important that the person should suit you. For I would not want, in spite of these immense riches, to see you have one unhappy day.

Think it over and let me know so that I can take it up with Bayer. . . . My wife embraces you tenderly and will rejoice to see you with us some day. We salute your worthy prince and princess. Bayer sends many messages and we await a prompt reply.[4] . . .

Four days later the brigadier wrote again:

. . . The Princes of Darmstadt greatly appreciate your remembrance of them. The elder will write you at the first opportunity. . . . Give our compliments to Baron Schilling on his marriage. My wife hopes that you will not find it necessary to get children for him as you did for M. de Hoeffel. Give our best to these two gentlemen. . . . I will not speak to you any more of our military enterprise. . . . But I shall await your reply to my last letter which is more solid.[5] . . .

The Baron wrote to Hahn on June 23. His letter is no longer extant. But the brigadier replied on the twenty-eighth:

I have received, my very dear friend, your letter of the twenty-third of this month. Yesterday I had a quarter of an hour's conversation with Bayer in regard to you, and we will treat that affair as our own. Be well persuaded of it. Perhaps in time we shall have need of your presence, but not yet. . . . My wife embraces you sincerely, and I am as always, my dear Steuben, Your sincere friend.

Hahn.[6]

Hahn's efforts as a matrimonial agent came to nothing. We tremble to think what might have happened to the cause of American independence, if Steuben had found a rich wife in Mademoiselle de Goll.

CHAPTER XIV

STUTTGART—KARLSRUHE—STRASSBURG

1

LATER in 1776, there appeared to be a favorable opportunity for Steuben to enter the imperial service. Just at that time it became known that the Emperor, Joseph II, expected to visit Suabia during the coming spring. It was his plan to travel incognito as the Count de Falkenstein. He would visit Stuttgart among other cities of the Empire. Thence he would cross the Rhine and go to Paris to see his sister, Queen Marie Antoinette. Steuben hoped to get a private interview with the Emperor during his sojourn at Stuttgart. On December 29 he wrote to a friend in the Emperor's suite, apparently General von Ried, seeking information as to the plans of the Count de Falkenstein. His friend replied on January 4 that the Emperor's plans were secret and that he was forbidden to reveal them.[1] The Count de Falkenstein would travel strictly as a private gentleman. He would stop at a tavern in Stuttgart and Steuben might very well be there at the same time with his patron, the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. But it must not appear that there had been any understanding between Steuben and the writer of the letter. Of course, if the prince and Steuben should go to Stuttgart on their own initiative, no doubt the writer would have a favorable opportunity to present the Baron to the Emperor. It was expected that such a personal interview would further Steuben's plans.

On April 4, 1777, the Prince de Ligne, an officer of high rank in the imperial service, wrote to Steuben:

My dear Baron:

I had thought of getting you to enter our service even before the idea occurred to you—when I heard you speak of military affairs with the talent that distinguishes a pupil of the hero from whom you have learned so much. Independent of any personal gratification I should derive, I believed that it would be very fortunate for our service to have you amongst us.

I should like you to see the Emperor when he passes through your province, for I am sure that you would make the same favorable impression upon him that you made upon me. Without this it will be impossible for you to enter the service.

I have just received a letter from Field Marshal Lascy, whom I asked, as a particular favor, to get a commission in my own regiment for a colonel of the very highest distinction. But he informed me that it is utterly impossible and not to be thought of. You see with what regret I acquaint you with this, my dear Baron. If there were a war, I should exert myself to get you, for our own sake more than for yours, so that your talents should not be left unemployed.[2]

2

BUT nothing came of the Baron's efforts to enter the imperial service. Soon after the Prince de Ligne wrote his letter, Steuben left Hechingen for the court of Baden where he sought to enter the service of the Margrave. This is shown from the following translation of a letter dated April 7, 1777, in the official archives at Karlsruhe:

His most Serene Highness, the Margrave.
Most Gracious Prince and Master.

The desire to devote to your Princely Highness my most humble and faithful services is neither the result of my present circumstances nor of my none too favorable outlook upon the future. The first moment when I had the good fortune to be presented to Your Princely Highness by the Princess of Württemberg aroused in me a desire which I have now for thirteen years nourished with constant and unfulfilled hope to serve that master to whom my heart had paid homage in that first moment.

But since now I cannot help fearing that those abilities I wish to employ in Your Highness' service may be weakened by further postponement, I am at last so bold as to lay my long unspoken wish at Your Highness' feet.

Your Highness knows me through a part of my history as a soldier for twenty-two years. The last years I have devoted to the management of the household and financial affairs of my present master.* Unlike as these two occupations are, I have no lack of testimony that in both I have worked with good success. In what capacity Your Highness might be pleased to put me remains at Your Grace's discretion and wish. What I lack in ability would be made up for by my zeal.

The good fortune to be attached by duties to Your Highness remains the one and only goal of my wishes, and with the deepest respect, I have the honor to be,

Your Princely Highness, Margrave,
Gracious Prince and Master, your
most humble and obedient servant,

von Steuben.[3]

It is endorsed on the foregoing document in the Baden archives that on April 16 the following letter was sent to Steuben by Baron von Edelsheim,† Privy Councilor and Minister:

Herr Hofmarschal von Steuben:

His Highness would, to be sure, be pleased to employ you either in the army or at court or both. Since, however, the funds appropriated to both have been allotted so completely and in a manner no longer to His Highness' satisfaction, His Highness has already given orders, on that account, to make other arrangements.

His Highness hopes that by this means, as well as through several vacancies which seem likely in the near future, he will very soon be put in a position to bring about a new arrangement and even to make use of you for completing it and to give you an appointment in his service in a fitting manner, in which case the salary would never be under 1,000 florins.[4]

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* This indicates that Steuben had not been discharged from the service of the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen.

† Steuben and Edelsheim had been friends for some time. In the Hechingen archives there is a friendly letter from Edelsheim, dated Sept. 21, 1776, in which he informs the Baron that the Duke of Weimar has arrived in Karlsruhe and that "we would all be charmed to see you here." This is the Duke of Weimar who was Goethe's friend and patron.

3

IT was while Steuben was seeking employment in Baden that his attention was first directed to the possibility of military service in America. No doubt he had already heard of the Revolutionary War. The siege of Boston and the victory at Trenton had already carried Washington's fame to Europe. But while at Karlsruhe, America was first presented to him as a promising field for his own ambition. According to the *Journal von und für Deutschland* there was an "Englishman of the opposition party" attached to the margrave's court. This gentleman had several conversations with Steuben and explained the American situation to him. France was giving secret aid to the colonies and had sent over a number of trained officers. But none of them was experienced in the higher branches of military administration. When the Baron heard this he remarked that a friend of his had acquired just such experience under Frederick the Great during the Seven Years' War. He thought this experienced veteran might be induced to enter the American service if a favorable offer were made to him. The Englishman reported these conversations to Beaumarchais, Franklin and Silas Deane in Paris. In due time he was informed that if his experienced acquaintance would come to Paris with proper credentials, he would be given a chance to discuss the matter in more detail. Thereupon Steuben set out for Paris in May, bearing letters of introduction to the French Ministry.

The foregoing account is partially confirmed by letters in the Franklin Papers. There was indeed an "Englishman of the opposition party" in the service of the margrave at that time. This gentleman, Mr. P. P. Burdett, was an old friend of Benjamin Franklin's. His letters show that he was familiar with the political situation in the colonies and that he numbered John Adams and other prominent Americans among his friends. Just before Steuben's arrival in Baden, Burdett had written Franklin in behalf of another officer who desired to enter the American service.[5] Within the next few weeks, he must have had his interviews with Steuben, for sometime in May he wrote a letter in the Baron's behalf. This letter cannot be found, but in June Burdett wrote to Franklin:

Sir!

The bearer is Baron Steuben of whom I had the honor to write to you by the hands of a Friend about a month since.

He is a gentleman of Family, merit and great experience, well known to some of the First personages in Europe, and hereby gives you Sir a strong proof of his ambition to make the acquaintance of Doctor Franklin in actually performing a Journey from Germany to Paris for that purpose.[6] . . .

4

THERE is some uncertainty as to the date of Steuben's arrival in Paris. It was evidently not in May, as the *Journal von und für Deutschland* tells us, for he did not receive the letter of introduction from Burdett to Franklin until sometime in June. His own memoirs do not help us. In one of them he says that he went to Paris in April, in another that he arrived there in May. But in another document he left conclusive proof that he did not reach Paris until some days after June 10. The first stage of his journey brought him to Strassburg and there he gave the following promissory note:

I owe the merchant, Stromeyer, the Sum of £421 14 *s.* and promise to pay the same within 6 weeks of this time. If, however, the merchant in Ebingen, who has in his hands the tailor Straub's account written below, has already been paid by the princely treasury, then the sum of £260 14 *s.* is to be deducted.

Strassburg, June 10, 1777 F. W. Steuben.

[Endorsement, written later]

We certify that we have received nothing from the merchant at Ebingen.

Ludwig Friedrich Stromeyer,
Straub.[7]

Apparently the Baron found it necessary to stop off in Strassburg in order to finance his further journey. Apparently, too, he stopped long enough for "the tailor Straub" to replenish his wardrobe. It would not do for a distinguished officer of Frederick the Great to arrive in Paris as a shabby gentleman obviously out of pocket and out of a job. The Baron had many friends in Strassburg. He had lived there at times with the Prince of Hohenzollern when he was masquerading as the Count de Hombourg. His old friend, Colonel Zanthier of the Alsace Regiment, was now stationed there. Perhaps, too, the friendly Princes of Darmstadt were still in town. There, too, lived his solicitous friends, Hahn and Bayer, who had recently sought to mend his fortunes in profitable matrimony. There were plenty of gentlemen of quality and distinction ready and willing to commend our hero to the house of Stromeyer.

But as things turned out, the Baron was overoptimistic when he fixed the term of the note at six weeks. As usual, he was eating his veal before his calf was born. His American enterprise did not pay the immediate dividends that he expected. He was not able to take up the note at the end of six weeks. Indeed, six years later, Herr Stromeyer was still seeking to collect it through the American minister in Paris. The American minister transmitted it in due form to the Continental Congress. That is why there is a copy of it in the papers of Charles Thomson, the secretary of Congress, and another in the papers of Benjamin Franklin.

The Baron's propensity to leave unpaid I O U's by the wayside has been a frequent convenience in my researches. It has enabled me to fix his coördinates of time and place on several occasions when no other documentary evidence could be found. When he left the Alsatian capital we do not know. Nor do we know how long it took him to make the three-hundred-mile journey to Paris. But as he was still in Strassburg on June 10, we may assume that he did not arrive in Paris much before the middle of the month.

CHAPTER XV

STEUBEN'S FIRST JOURNEY TO PARIS

1

IN several memoirs which he wrote later in life, the Baron gives graphic accounts (but no two exactly alike) of the Parisian negotiations that led to his American adventure. But unfortunately the story they tell is fiction and not history. They do not give us the actual adventures of the poor captain who went to Paris in quest of a job. They tell us how a well-to-do German nobleman of high military rank set out in the spring of 1777 to spend the summer as the guest of Lords Spencer and Warwick in England: how this affluent gentleman casually decided to make a little pleasure visit to Paris en route to Calais; how, while enjoying the gayeties of that attractive city, he decided to call upon his old friend, Count de St. Germain, in order to compliment him upon his recent elevation to the War Ministry: how St. Germain finally received him with great secrecy at the arsenal: how in this interview he received his first knowledge of the military situation in America: how, to his amazement, St. Germain insisted that he, the Baron, was the very man needed to save the tottering Colonial cause: how he shrank from such a hazardous adventure at his time of life, for he was now in his forty-seventh year: how the minister assured him that it would be the pathway to honor and great riches: how St. Germain's eloquence gradually undermined his prudence, and in spite of himself the vision of the new republic began to haunt his brain even as the windmill had haunted the brain of Don Quixote: how he finally consented and reluctantly gave up his pleasure trip to England: how St. Germain introduced him to Beaumarchais and Beaumarchais introduced him to Franklin (for he makes no mention of the fact that he went to Paris expressly to see Franklin and with the sole purpose of seeking employment in the American service): how after many vicissitudes, he finally sailed for America as a volunteer: and how in taking this momentous step, he was compelled to relinquish a comfortable life income, derived from positions of honor and trust in Baden and elsewhere, and from pensions which had been conferred upon him by Frederick the Great and other exalted personages. We will return to these interesting fictions after considering the Baron's actual adventures in Paris.[1]

2

WHILE the real Steuben did not get his first impulse toward his American adventure from St. Germain, he sought an interview with him before he visited Franklin. The war minister had known the Baron for years and was acquainted with his professional standing. He would therefore be able to reënforce Burdett's personal letters with a strictly military endorsement. But the result of the interview far exceeded Steuben's expectations. St. Germain immediately took the initiative in the affair. He would do more than introduce the Baron to the American Commissioners. He would give him the powerful support of the French Government. It developed that what Steuben sought for himself would further his Most Christian Majesty's foreign policy.

In order to understand this sudden favorable turn in Steuben's fortunes, it will be necessary to consider the political relations between France and the American Colonies. During the years 1776 and 1777, France was giving valuable aid to the Colonies. This was not because the French ministers desired to promote the cause of democracy. It was because they desired to embarrass their neighbor and ancient enemy, His Britannic Majesty. This was before France declared war against England; she was still preserving all of the forms and proprieties of strict neutrality. It had therefore been necessary to camouflage her American operations. This had been accomplished through the ingenuity of Caron de Beaumarchais, the great dramatist and one of the great intriguers of the century.

Beaumarchais, with the connivance of Vergennes, the French foreign minister, formed a commercial corporation known as Hortalez & Co., which entered into the business of shipping arms and munitions to America. The corporation operated strictly on its own account; but the Government subscribed liberally to its capital stock and permitted it to procure arms and munitions on credit from the royal arsenals. It is thus quite clear that the French Government, as such, was not giving aid and comfort to England's rebellious Colonies. It simply anticipated a corporate device of the twentieth century and Hortalez became what we would call "a dummy company."

In the spring of 1777, the affairs of Hortalez & Co. were in a bad way. Arms and other military stores shipped to America were being lost and damaged more rapidly than they could be supplied. Some were lost at sea, some were captured by the British Army; such mischances were to be expected in war and could be anticipated. But more serious losses occurred in the Continental Army itself. Because of the lack of organization, discipline and administrative experience, more military material was lost, damaged, and wasted by the troops than was captured by the enemy. Unless these conditions could be corrected, the Colonial effort must fail even if backed by all the wealth of France.

Through Vergennes and Beaumarchais this critical situation was brought to the notice of the French Ministry of War. Fortunately the war minister, Count de St. Germain, was not an ordinary bureaucrat, but a war-schooled veteran. He had been a practical field soldier and able general for many years. As a young man, he had won his spurs under such commanders as Prince Eugene and Marshal Saxe; later, he had served for a time in the Prussian Army under Frederick the Great. Before the Seven Years' War he had returned to the French Army as a lieutenant general. He commanded the rearguard after the battle of Rossbach, and saved the remnants of King Louis' army from annihilation. A little later he wrote a caustic criticism of the French military system. In 1760, after a quarrel with Marshal Broglie, he entered the Danish service as field marshal, reorganized the undisciplined and ill-trained Danish Army, and prepared it for effective defense against Russia. For this he received the high praise of Frederick the Great. After his Danish service he had lived in retirement in Alsace until he was called to the Ministry of War in 1775.

To such a man as St. Germain the diagnosis of the American crisis was simple. It was obvious that the American commander needed competent technical advice. Washington was an able and forceful leader but he was not a trained soldier. He needed a staff officer trained in the practical business methods of conducting war.

But why did not the French war minister detail a suitable officer from his own army? There were two reasons. In the first place, to send an active officer of sufficient rank and prestige would be an obvious violation of neutrality. In the second, St. Germain knew that there was no effective staff and no sound system of staff education in the French Army at that time. It contained many brave officers and men, but few of its commanders and staff officers were fit to lead them. St. Germain saw this clearly. He knew the real secret of Frederick's victory at Rossbach. It was a monument to French inferiority as well as to Prussian superiority. The France of Madame Pompadour could not compete with the Prussia of Frederick the Great. St. Germain knew that the France of his day could send no gospel of military efficiency to Washington.

Since his appointment to the War Ministry, St. Germain had striven to reform the French service. But this had only brought him enemies. He had frankly sought to introduce Prussian discipline and efficiency into France. This was an unpardonable sin and soon led to his enforced retirement from the Ministry of War.

3

IT was just while St. Germain was struggling with this problem that his old acquaintance, Captain von Steuben, called upon him in Paris. His arrival was providential. Here was the very man that Hortalez & Co. should send to Washington. The Baron was not an officer of high rank but St. Germain had known him for years and was aware that his purely professional equipment was of the highest quality then known to the world. His professional standing was attested by the best possible credentials. In the fierce school of the Seven Years' War he had won a place on the operations staff of Frederick the Great. He was therefore a "General Staff officer" when the very conception of a modern General Staff was scarcely known outside of Prussia. St. Germain was probably the only man in France at that time with enough knowledge and breadth of vision to appraise these peculiar qualifications. Franklin, Deane, Beaumarchais and Vergennes each did his part in procuring Steuben's services for America. But without St. Germain's unique insight to guide them, none of them could have appreciated the importance of enlisting him. It was thus through St. Germain that Hortalez & Co. was enabled to ship military wisdom as well as military supplies to the American Colonies. In evaluating our debt to France, we should not forget that one of her greatest services was to send us the Prussian expert, Steuben.

His opportune visit to St. Germain put the Baron's business on a new basis. He would now go to Franklin with the full support of the French Government. St. Germain and Vergennes wrote strong letters in his behalf. They also presented Steuben to Beaumarchais and instructed him, as their secret agent, to further his business with the American Commissioners. Beaumarchais, in the meantime, was strongly attracted to the Baron. He espoused his project as a primary concern of Hortalez & Co. The soldier and the dramatist became close friends. While in Paris, the Baron made his headquarters at Beaumarchais' house.

4

IN due time Beaumarchais communicated with the American Commissioners. They were greatly interested and it was arranged that they should receive Steuben at Franklin's house in

Passy. But there the Baron encountered difficulties. Franklin and Deane were as pleased with his bearing and personality as they had been impressed by the high encomiums from St. Germain and Vergennes. They recognized the importance of securing his services, but they were not empowered to make any contract with him. So many foreign officers had gone to America that they had become a source of embarrassment to Washington and the Continental Congress. The appointment of Lafayette and DeKalb as major generals had aroused so much jealousy and discontent among the American officers that Congress had instructed the commissioners in France to make no more promises of rank or pay in the American service. They could make no exception in Steuben's behalf. They had no discretion in the matter. If the Baron desired to go to America as a volunteer they would provide him with letters to General Washington and to the leaders of Congress. With his exceptional talents and experience, as the French Ministry vouched for them, Congress would in all probability make satisfactory terms with him, but they were positively instructed to make no promise or guarantee in behalf of the American Government.

This was a disappointment to the Baron. He had hoped to receive a suitable commission and to be placed on the American pay roll. Yet even this blow did not quite discourage him. The American adventure had so appealed to his imagination that he was disposed to go as a volunteer and take a gambler's chance of finding employment. But when he found that Franklin and Deane were not even empowered to pay his travel expenses, he felt that he must abandon the enterprise. Indeed, when Franklin hinted that, in lieu of money, a grant of forest land in the American wilderness might be arranged for him, he felt that this was insult added to injury. He therefore left the Commissioners in disgust. He returned to Beaumarchais and told him that he was through with the American expedition and made his arrangements to return to Germany.

According to the article in the *Journal von und für Deutsch-*

land, Steuben did not return to Germany at once after the failure of his negotiations with Franklin. First, he sought a commission in the French Army. This failed because there were no vacancies and probably also because he was a Prussian. Then he applied to Count d'Aranda, the Spanish ambassador, for a place in the army of Spain. But there was no place for a Protestant heretic in the army of His Most Catholic Majesty.* After these failures his return to Germany was expedited by news that employment awaited him in Karlsruhe.

This magazine account is probably true. The mythical well-to-do Steuben had only to return to his perquisites and comfortable circumstances in Germany. The actual Steuben was out of a job, penniless, and in debt. No doubt when the American enterprise failed, he sought an opening elsewhere through St. Germain and the Count d'Aranda. But while these gentlemen appreciated his talents and were eager to employ them in America, neither of them was able to find him a place in the regular army of his own country. Then, just as he was meeting these discouragements, news came, apparently from his faithful friend Edelsheim, that at last there was an opening for him in the service of the Margrave of Baden. Thereupon, the Baron speeded his return to Germany.

5

But Steuben's cup of misfortune was not yet full. In Baden he found not only a new disappointment but a most bitter humiliation. This appears from the following draft of a letter in the archives at Karlsruhe.

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* There is also a story to the effect that Steuben sought service in the British Army in America at this time. I have found no evidence of this and the facts given in Chaps. XIII and XIV tend to refute it. But even if the story be true it involves no discredit or reproach. He was an eighteenth-century professional soldier out of a job; and under the accepted ethics of his profession, he was free to offer his sword to any nation that might give it profitable employment. There could have been no disloyalty in this as he was under no obligation to the American Colonies.

August 13, 1777.

To His Highness, the Prince
of Hohenzollern-Hechingen.

I know the infinite good will that Your Highness has for the Baron de Steuben, but not all those who form your court feel the same way about him.

It has come to me from different sources that M. de Steuben is accused of having taken familiarities with young boys which the laws forbid and punish severely. I have even been informed that that is the reason why M. de Steuben was obliged to leave Hechingen and that the clergy of your country intend to prosecute him by law as soon as he may establish himself anywhere.

Your Highness would surely commend me even if only the title of friend made me take a special interest in the case of Baron de Steuben. But there is a greater reason added to that and this letter must excuse me for the liberty I take in addressing myself directly and with frankness to Your Highness.

Since Monseigneur the margrave contemplates attaching him to his service it is my duty to insure the Baron de Steuben against calumny and falsehood and establish his moral reputation as unshakeably as possible before seeing him take his place among us.

He himself has told me to address myself directly to Your Highness in order to receive the best and most certain information.

It is, Monseigneur, a question of giving a mark of your justice and your goodness—those two principles of your character.

Has the Baron de Steuben been accused of the crime in question?

In any event, are these vulgar rumors proved or can they be proved, or have the enemies of Baron de Steuben been thrown out of court?

In that case, would Your Highness be disposed to have a testimonial sent to Baron de Steuben in which the rumor which is circulating concerning his conduct should be declared calumnious, all further persecution forbidden and the innocence of Baron de Steuben attested?

I know, Monseigneur, your great and good heart. I expect everything from it. It will plead my excuses and it is to it that I address the respectful homage with which I have the honor to be.[2] . . .

The archives do not give the name of the author of this letter. The context shows that he was a high officer of state; the indignant tone proves that he was also a friend of Steuben's. As the letter of April 16, offering Steuben the prospect of employment in Baden, was written by his friend, Privy Councilor Baron von Edelsheim, there is a strong presumption that he also wrote this letter of August 13. There is no reply, and no other record of this accusation in the archives of Karlsruhe, Hechingen or Sigmaringen.

That such a rumor was circulated against Steuben is mentioned in the anonymous article in the *Journal von und für Deutschland.* Ebeling, writing in 1796 and with the article before him, summarized the matter as follows:

> Just who it was who spread abroad this abominable rumor which accused Steuben of a crime the suspicion of which, at another more exalted court at that time* (as formerly among the Greeks), would hardly have aroused such attention, has not become publicly known.
>
> However, the story goes that the clergy succeeded in making Steuben detested by his prince, so that he was obliged to take himself to Karlsruhe to the court of the Margrave of Baden.
>
> It was in accordance with the way of the world that the man, when he fell into disfavor, was deserted by his friends. Yet one friend remained to him, namely, the worthy Chancellor Frank, who disregarded the screaming of the slanderers, energetically espoused the cause of his friend even with the prince, and saved his honor. That the faithful friend fully succeeded in this clearly appears from the fact that even from America Steuben interchanged with the prince and the chief men at his court letters which testify to the most perfect understanding with them. But before that understanding was restored, Steuben remained for a long time in a very unpleasant situation.[3]

I agree with Ebeling that the story was probably a malicious slander that originated among Steuben's enemies at Hechingen.

* Here Ebeling probably refers to the court of Frederick the Great.

That it grew out of jealousy and religious bigotry is not improbable; for it will be recalled that the Baron was a Protestant minister at the head of a Catholic court, the heretic favorite of an orthodox prince. If the story was credited at one time by the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen, he was evidently convinced later of its falsity and cruel injustice. For, as we shall see, the Baron was eventually restored to his affectionate regard.[4]

It is impossible to prove the falsity of such a story. But it is perhaps pertinent for me to say that the charge is inconsistent with the conception of Steuben's personality that has grown up in my mind after eight years' study of every memorial of him that I could find.

But whether false or true, it is certain that the charge was made and that it was a final determining influence in sending Steuben to America. The mere currency of such a scandalous rumor was enough to destroy his usefulness in Baden as well as in Hechingen. It cut off his last hope of employment or of a refuge in Germany. Poor, in debt,[5] no longer young, forsaken by all but a few of his bravest friends, he had no way to turn. So, when letters came from Beaumarchais and St. Germain calling him back to Paris, he went at once. The American adventure was now his only hope.

CHAPTER XVI

STEUBEN'S SECOND JOURNEY TO PARIS

1

STEUBEN arrived in Paris on his return journey about August 18. St. Germain and Beaumarchais were eagerly awaiting him. It was now decided that he should go to America simply as a distinguished foreigner who desired to serve as a volunteer under Washington. As such, he would travel to America ostensibly at his own expense. But actually, Hortalez & Co. would provide him with a ship and finance his journey. Franklin and Deane would give him letters of introduction. They would transmit the testimonials of Vergennes and St. Germain to Washington and to the leaders in Congress. Once in America his undoubted merits, his high credentials, and his engaging personality would win him a place in the Colonial service. If not, the French Government would give him suitable compensation.

2

But there was one flaw in this plan. St. Germain could vouch for Steuben's professional attainments, but still the Baron was only a captain when he left the Prussian Army. Captain von Steuben might serve as a useful officer on Washington's staff, but this was not enough. This would make no appeal to the imagination of the Continental Congress and the army. The Baron must be *sold* to the American people. If he were only a general instead of a captain! If he could go to America as a distinguished soldier of high rank with a brilliant staff, his chances would be better. He would be received as the honored guest of the American nation with a prestige and éclat that would prepare the way for his reforms.

Then somebody in that little Parisian group had a stroke of genius. Like many strokes of genius it was very simple. If the success of the Baron's American Embassy depended on his wearing a general's coat, the problem was purely sartorial. Any good military tailor could solve it. And this solution was adopted. His Excellency, Lieutenant General von Steuben, picked up a military secretary and an aide-de-camp, procured brilliant uniforms for himself and his staff and prepared to sail for America.

I have been unable to determine who first invented that highly salutary prevarication. Steuben may have been the playwright as well as the leading actor in the play. Or perhaps Beaumarchais was the author, and indeed it was a dramatic conception quite worthy of the creator of *Figaro*. If he did not invent the fiction he was a party to it. He financed the play and otherwise acted as *impresario* for His Excellency, the new lieutenant general, and advanced him 3,120 francs* for the expenses of his journey. St. Germain was undoubtedly a party to the plot. He had known Steuben since his discharge from the Prussian Army. He knew that he was not a lieutenant general. In fact, he knew that through Brigadier Hahn the Baron had recently sought a French commission as colonel.

Franklin and Deane did their part in writing letters of introduction for the distinguished traveler. On September 4 they wrote jointly to Washington:

> The Gentleman who will have the honor of waiting upon you with this Letter is the Baron Steuben, Lieut. Genl. in the king of Prussia's Service, whom he attended in all his campaigns, being his Aid de Camp, quartermaster Genl. etc. He goes to America with a true Zeal for our Cause and a View of engaging in it and rendering it all the Service in his Power. He is recommended to us by two of the best Judges of Military Merit in this Country: Mr. Le Comte de Vergennes and Mr. Le Comte de St. Germain who have long been personally acquainted with him, and interest themselves in promoting his Voyage from a full persuasion that the knowledge and Experience he has acquired by 20 years Study and Practice in the Prussian School may be of great use in our Armies. I Can-

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* In a bill rendered in 1785, he adds interest for eight years.[1]

not therefore but recommend him warmly to your Excellency, wishing that our Service may be made agreeable to him.[2]

3

AND what of Benjamin Franklin? When he presented Steuben to Washington as a lieutenant general, still in the service of Frederick the Great, was he a party to the pious fraud or only a dupe? Hardly the latter. He who asserts that Franklin was ever taken in has the burden of proof against him. And in this case presumption is supported by documentary evidence. We have seen that the doctor had been in correspondence about Steuben with his trusted friend Burdett for over four months before he wrote the letter of introduction. When Franklin wrote it he knew that the Baron was no longer in the Prussian service and that he had never been a general officer in Prussia or elsewhere.

Indeed it is probable that the important phrase, "in the King of Prussia's service," originated with Franklin. Later, when the Baron referred to his lieutenant generalcy, he had the modesty and prudence to claim it under one of the minor agencies of the Holy Roman Empire. On this point, however, his memory was never very accurate. Sometimes he would say that he had been a lieutenant general in Baden, at other times that he had held that rank in the Circle of Suabia. It is hardly likely that he could have represented himself to the American Commissioners as an officer of high rank still in the Prussian service. With a Prussian minister resident in Paris, such a lie must have met with speedy exposure. And such a representation from St. Germain or Vergennes would have been even more absurd. Franklin was undoubtedly informed that the Baron had served in the Prussian Army during the Seven Years' War. He was probably told that later Steuben had become a lieutenant general elsewhere. It is therefore barely possible that the doctor, with his limited knowledge of military technicalities, might have got the two stories mixed. But, more likely, he knew exactly what he was about. He realized that his letter to Washington was really "advertising copy." The doctor had had considerable experience and success in that species of literature. He fully appreciated the sales value of emphasis and simplicity. And if he was going to sell a fictitious lieutenant general to his fellow countrymen for the good of their country, why not sell one with a well-recognized trade-mark? The trade-mark of Frederick the Great would mean something to every intelligent man in America. The trade-mark of the Margrave of Baden would be a drug on the market.

4

SILAS DEANE wrote the following interesting letter to Robert Morris, then a prominent leader in Congress:

> The bearer, Monsieur Le Baron de Steuben, Lieutenant General in the Prussian Army, has seen more than Twenty Years Service under the King of Prussia, part of which he served as Quartermaster General, and Aide-de-Camp to the King. The General peace in Europe and his design of distinguishing himself in the American Cause induce him to make tenders of his Service to the Congress. He has letters of Recommendation from Prince Henry of Prussia as well as other great Personages and is warmly recommended by the Ministry here who are acquainted with his Person as well as Character.
>
> He came to Paris about two months since with the desire of embarking immediately, but no opportunity offering, and being advised to Suspend his Resolution for a short time, he returned to Germany, and on being applied to by some of our friends here, he made a Second Journey to Paris. *But not certain of pursuing his voyage, he left behind him the Certificates of his Services which he had with him on his first Journey to Paris. I mention this, as he had proposed to send for them but I advised him not to delay his setting out on that account for that having seen them, and also the recommendation of the Ministers here, I thought it would only be the Loss of time.** I take the Liberty of recommending him immediately to you, to be introduced to the Congress, and to Gen'l Washington from whom, I doubt not, his abilities and Long Ex-

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* The italics are mine.

perience and Zeal for the American Cause, will meet with the attention and respect which they merit.[3] . . .

Deane's letter merits careful consideration. In the two italicized sentences, he adroitly forestalled any Congressional inquiry as to why the Baron did not take his military commissions and other records of service to America with him. If any member should be disposed to ask for documents he would, perforce, be satisfied by Deane's assertion that the credentials had been officially examined and accepted by the American Commissioners in Paris. A reader of the letter must also infer that Silas had seen documentary proof of the Baron's Prussian commission as lieutenant general. Such an exalted rank must have been mentioned in the letter from Prince Henry who was a distinguished general in the Prussian Army as well as the brother of Frederick the Great. Deane's letter thus assured the practical success of the fraud. On the whole, we must concede that Silas shares the honors with Franklin and Beaumarchais and St. Germain and the Baron himself, as a highly gifted member of a distinguished chapter of the Ananias Club.

Deane's letter to Robert Morris also throws light on the financial aspects of the Baron's pilgrimage to America. In a postscript he says: "I mention the expense of his journey as a favor done us by our zealous and constant friends, Messrs Rodrigue Hortalez & Co. who will write you in his Behalf and give him a Letter for Fifty Louis, which you will, I doubt not, duly honour." On September 10, Beaumarchais wrote to the secret committee of Congress relative to this order for 50 louis to be credited to the account of Hortalez & Co. He commends the Baron highly and says that he has discussed "the merit of this officer with the greatest generals that we have" and that they accord "unanimous homage . . . to his knowledge in the art of war."[4]

5

BEFORE quitting Paris, the new lieutenant general formed his personal staff. He selected Louis de Pontière as his aide-de-camp and Pierre Étienne Duponceau as his military secretary. Steuben had met Duponceau at Beaumarchais' house when he first came to Paris and was strongly attracted to the young nobleman. He was only seventeen years of age but he was proficient in the English language; and the Baron, who spoke no English, had used him from the first as his interpreter. Duponceau was a member of Steuben's staff until near the end of the Revolution. He remained in America and, as Stephen S. Duponceau, became a prominent citizen of Philadelphia. In his old age, he wrote his memoirs for his granddaughter and we are indebted to these unpublished papers for most of the details of the Baron's pilgrimage from Paris to Valley Forge.[5]

The Baron did not neglect the sartorial adornment of himself and his military family. Duponceau tells us that they were bedecked in "scarlet regimentals turned up with blue." This brilliant uniform was chosen because Steuben was erroneously informed that the colors of the English Army had been adopted in the American service. Thus the new lieutenant general cut an elegant and imposing figure when he made his adieux to his Parisian accomplices. Behold him with the insignia of his rank and the bejeweled Star of the Order of Baden shining upon his scarlet coat!

In leaving Paris about September 10, the Baron and his staff were accompanied by M. de Francy, the nephew and agent of Beaumarchais. The Baron was also attended by his German servant, Carl Vogel, and his beautiful Italian greyhound, Azor. We have no details of his route to the south, but a note of Duponceau's makes it clear that he took the great road southward from Dijon through Burgundy and thence through Lyons and down the Rhone. Says Duponceau:

> I shall never forget leaving at an inn in France the beautiful sword which Baron Steuben presented me with in Paris. He took it from his side telling me, "My dear Duponceau, please to accept this sword; I shall teach you how to make use of it." The sword was silver hilted, damasked with gold. On my way to Marseilles to embark for this country, I left it at an inn, at Maçon in Bur-

gundy; and never perceived it until it was too late to retrace my steps.[6]

In this, his last journey down the valley of the Rhone, the Baron followed the familiar route that he had traversed so often with the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. He thus bade farewell to many familiar places. No doubt he drank a stirrup cup with many an old friend at Lyons and Avignon and Arles and elsewhere along the way. But he thought of it as au revoir and not adieu. In a little while he would return from America laden with riches and honors.

6

AT Marseilles the Baron's party embarked on *L'Heureux*, a frigate of 300 tons and 28 guns commanded by Captain Landais of the French Navy. As she bore a valuable cargo of munitions for the American Army, she masqueraded as a merchantman, and, for this voyage, assumed the name *Le Flamand*. She cleared for the French West Indies but with secret sailing orders for the entrepôt of Hortalez & Co. at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Baron shipped as Mr. Frank, the bearer of dispatches for the Governor of Martinique. No doubt his "scarlet regimentals" and the other insignia of his exalted rank were well concealed in the hold until he approached the end of his journey.

The *Flamand* sailed from Marseilles on September 26, 1777. The Baron's account of the voyage is as follows:

> A better description of a storm will be found in *Robinson Crusoe* or in any book of adventure than I could give. I will only say that we had two of them, very violent—one in the Mediterranean, off the African coast, the other off the coast of New Caledonia [Nova Scotia?]. Each lasted three days; both, and especially the first, damaged our frigate so much that our naval officers became very much disheartened. Add to these trifles, that the forecastle of the ship was three times on fire, that we had seventeen hundred weight of gunpowder on board, and that a mutiny of the crew made it necessary for us to fight, fourteen against eighty-four, in order to

secure the chiefs of the rebels; and also that it took sixty-six days, in the most dangerous season, to make the passage—and you will imagine that this voyage was one of the hardest ever known.[7]

The Baron employed what leisure he had on such a voyage in seeking knowledge of the mysterious new world that lay before him. Duponceau tells us that he read Abbé Raynal's account of the American Colonies. He supplemented this with more vivid and more accurate impressions from the memory of Captain Landais, an experienced mariner who had circumnavigated the globe in Bougainville's famous expedition and knew the coasts of North America at first hand.

7

But what with storms and mutiny and books and sailors' yarns, there were long hours of solitude at sea. If there were painful memories of lost opportunity, of poverty and of wasted youth in Europe, there must also have been bright air castles of the future. Of these, the Baron was always a master builder. In America he would find the glory and the great possessions that St. Germain had pictured to him. In a few years he would return to Europe in triumph. There would be rich rewards from the grateful American States and from His Most Christian Majesty. He would have a fine house in Paris, a winter château at Montpellier, and a summer lodge in the Black Forest. His lordly hospitality would be the talk of Paris, of Hechingen, of Karlsruhe and Wildbad. The Star of Baden would be buried under greater decorations. He would make the fortunes of Frank and Hahn and other faithful friends. With his princely generosity, he would heap coals of fire upon the heads of lukewarm friends and enemies. Even the great King of Prussia would regret that he had misprized the loyal service of so great a man. These visions he saw over the tumbling billows. But the real future lay hidden before him. There would be triumphs indeed, great joys and great sorrows—but never again a glimpse of Europe. And finally a lonely grave in the forest wilderness north of the Mohawk—that too lay hidden from him.

INTERLUDE

THE BARON'S OWN STORY

WHILE Steuben is on the high seas is a convenient time to appraise his own account of his life in Europe. For this purpose, I have transcribed one of his own autobiographical sketches, which he probably prepared to lay before Congress.[1]

. . . In October, 1774, I was appointed Colonel of the Circle. The emoluments of that office added to those I was already possessed of and a prebend in the Chapter of Havelsburg, rendered my situation pretty agreeable.*

In the year 1766, the Prince Margrave of Baden created me a Knight of his Order and appointed me as Lieut. Gen. to the command of his troops with a pension of two thousand German florins.†

All those small pensions put together with the Bounties with which some Princes honored me, made me sensible of the advantages of my situation which I had no wish to change. I refused offers both honorable and Lucrative in the Austrian Service.

My revenues were not only sufficient to afford me the conveniences of Life, but enabled me every year to take a Journey for my amusement. I spent several winters in France. It was one of those winters I renewed my acquaintance with the Count St. Germain, at the house of Count Waldner in Alsatia & as he had purchased a small Country seat near Colmar, I visited him often in his retirement. I saw him but a little while before he was called to the Ministry.

I spent the winter of 1775 at Montpellier where I formed friendly connexions with several English Noblemen, but most particularly with the Lords Spencer and Warwick who engaged me to go over to England & spend a summer there. That project was however deferred till the year 1777. In the month of April of that year, I went to Paris on my way to Calais where I intended to be in the beginning of June.

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* The Hechingen archives show that Count Herman zu Hohenzollern was colonel of the Circle of Suabia during Steuben's residence in Hechingen. The archives at Havelsburg contain complete lists of all the functionaries and pensioners of the Cathedral of Havelsburg. Steuben's name is not among them.

† The Baron became a Knight of Fidelity in 1769. We have seen in Chap. XIV that he was never in the service of the Margrave of Baden in any capacity. In another sketch he says that he became a lieutenant general in 1771, but under an imperial commission in the Circle of Suabia.

Altho' I had lost sight of M. de St. Germain since he was in the Ministry, being desirous to see him, I sent a note to him in which I expressed my desire of waiting upon him at Versailles. The same evening an officer (the Baron de Bagenstecher* of the Legion of Condé,) called upon me by his Order & desired me not to go to Versailles, adding that in three days at farthest, the Count would come himself to Paris & meet me at the Arsenal where he intended having a particular Conversation with me.

I was entirely at a loss how to acct. for his mistery—I had formed no ambitious schemes and was perfectly satisfied with my present situation—I could not find out the meaning of this Enigma. I can Certify upon my honor that among all the conjectures I made, the Truth never offered itself to my imagination—At last, M. de St. Germain arrived, & having sent for me by the same Officer who came the first time, I waited upon the Count who received me in his closet.

As the conversation that then took place was the basis of a step of the greatest Consequence to me, I shall transcribe it here as exactly as my Memory will permit me. The Count began by mentioning my intended voyage to England & the conversation naturally turned on the Embarrassed Situation in which the Kingdom found itself by the insurrection of its Colonies. M. de St. Germain appeared to me to consider these troubles in a more important light than I viewed them myself at that time. He told me that America had declared herself independent, & that he had no doubt but She would properly support that Declaration. He asked me what I thought of this Revolution, whether I did not think it worth while to lend a hand towards erecting that *grand edifice*,† as he termed it. He added that this growing Republick offered a brilliant Career to the Sons of Ambition. I answered by laying my situation before him, which tho' not very brilliant was still very far from disagreeable. On the other side I represented to him the hazard of such an Enterprize at my advanced Age* the want of the Language, &c. As he continued to insist, I asked him whether, not as a Minister but as a friend, he advised me to venture upon the execution of such a scheme. This was his answer *verbatim.* "Sir, as a Minister, I have no advice to give you on this Subject, but as your friend, I will never advise you to do anything which I would not do myself if I was not Employed in the King's Service."

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* This name is given as Pagenstecher in some of the other versions.

† In another version, Steuben refers further to the *grand edifice* as follows: "Although in this first interview nothing was settled, it cost me my tranquillity, and this *grand edifice* was always before my eyes, as the windmill was before Don Quixote's."[2]

I own that such was the ascendant M. de St. Germain had over me, that the idea appeared now less extravagant to me than it had done at the beginning. Nothing was however determined in this first interview. I saw the Count the day after & he took me again to task upon the subject. He desired me not to wait upon him at Versailles. He gave me a Letter for M. de Beaumarchais & warned me to be extremely Circumspect. As this affair began now to interest me, he had no need of recommending me to use discretion.

M. Beaumarchais introduced me immediately to Mr. Deane & the latter to Doctor Franklin, who had already received a Letter from the Count de Vergennes on my Subject.

The two American Agents appeared both equally to wish my passing over into the service of this Country. But when I mentioned a disbursement for the Expenses of my Journey they were not both equally disposed to grant it. Mr. Deane made no kind of difficulty. But Doctor Franklin started a great many. He spoke a great deal about acres of Land, of which, I own, I had not the greatest opinion. But as to any advances, he positively declared that I should not think about it, that he was not empowered to make any, & that he could not even enter into the least engagement with any Officer whatever. He told me that with an Air & Manner to which I was then little accustomed, & I immediately took leave without any further Explanation.

I went from thence to M. de Beaumarchais & I declared to him that I was to set out in three days for Germany & that I did not wish to hear any more of America. As soon as he was informed of the motives that induced me to take that resolution, he made in his turn a great parade of generosity. "If you want but money, Baron, a thousand Louis d'or & more are at your service." I thanked him for his generous offer, but at the same time told him that I was fixed in my determination to wait on the Count de St. Germain & to set out the next day for Durlach.

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* He was then in his forty-seventh year.

Such in fact was my resolution. On one side I was disgusted by Dr. Franklin's declaration. But I own that what contributed most to my determination was the advice of an old friend, Baron de Koch, a Lieutenant General in the Emperor's service, who came to see me while that affair was in agitation. I mentioned the project to him as a thought of my own. At first he treated it as a Chimera, but as he saw that I was serious, he shewed me all the absurdity of the scheme and I firmly determined to give up the Idea entirely.

The next day, according to my resolution, I waited on Count St. Germain at Versailles. Altho' he appeared somewhat hurt by my new determination, he engaged me to spend two days at Versailles and renew my acquaintance with the Prince de Montbarrey.

After dinner the Spanish Ambassador, Count d'Aranda, came in. M. de St. Germain introduced me to him adding, "Here is a man who will risque nothing, consequently he will gain nothing," which made me conceive that Count d'Aranda was let into the secret.

I waited on Prince Montbarrey who appeared to me as full of the American scheme as Mons. de St. Germain. I declared that I could not determine on anything before I had been to Germany for which place I intended to set out the next day.

When I arrived at Karlsruhe, I found there the Prince of Baden, a Lieut. Gen'l in the Dutch Service, & Governor of Arnheim. I also found a very persuasive Letter from Messieurs St. Germain & Beaumarchais. The confidence I had in that respectable Prince made me Consult him about that affair. Being himself engaged in the service of a Republick & probably more dazzled by the fantom of Glory than I was myself, he was of opinion that there was no room for hesitating & that I could never find a finer Opportunity than that which was then offered me. In fine he persuaded me, & it was not long before I carried my plan into execution. Having obtained the consent of the King of Prussia, I transferred my Canonry of Havelsburg to one of my nephews & I gave up the place of General in the service of Baden.*

I collected what money was necessary for my Journey and I arrived at Paris on the 16th of July. I waited immediately upon Count de St. Germain at Versailles where it was determined that I should without loss of time set out for America.

Prince de Montbarrey called upon me one morning & we went together to the Count de Vergennes to whom he introduced me, & who received us in his Closet. "You are then at last determined," said the Count to me, "to go to America?" I asked him whether he did not think this an Extravagant resolution. "By no means," answered he. "It is on the contrary the road to Glory & a means to acquire large possessions." "Besides," added he, "You must make good Conditions before hand & not rely too much on the generosity of Republicks." I acquainted him with what Dr. Franklin had told me, that there were no Conditions to be made with the Agents of America & I added that if the Republick I was going to serve should not act a generous part with me, that there was a generous Prince, at whose hands I would expect my reward. I added that I should expect to receive it thro' the Count de St. Germain and the Prince de Montbarrey. "You may well conceive, Baron," answered the Count, "that we cannot, at present, enter into any conditions. Set out without delay. Be successful, and you will not have to repent the step you now take." He again recommended discretion to me & told me of some particular persons whose company I was to avoid at Paris.†

When I arrived there [Paris], I waited on M. Monthieu to whom M. de St. Germain had directed me for a passage. He gave me the choice of two vessels, one from l'Orient and the other from Marseilles. By the advice of Count d'Aranda, I chose the latter.

I waited again on Dr. Franklin & without mentioning any conditions, I applied only for Letters to his friends. He gave me some for Mr. President Laurens, Mr. R. Morris & some few Members of Congress.

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* A marginal note on the manuscript says: "That Prebend [Havelsburg] brought me a revenue of 4600 livres. The Post of Lt. Gen. in the Margrave's service gave me 4800 livres, exclusive of several considerable perquisites. Both these revenues were assured me the rest of my life."

† In another version the Baron says that, in this final conference, he was assured that the court of Versailles would reimburse him if the American enterprise should fail.

M. de Monthieu accompanied me himself to Marseilles, where I embarked on the 26th of Sept. & after a long dangerous Voyage I landed at Portsmouth, N. H., on the 1st of Dec. 1777.

PART II

AN AMERICAN GENERAL

CHAPTER XVII

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

1

THE *Flamand* finally arrived off Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on December 1, 1777. Before landing, the Baron sent his secretary ashore to inform the commanding officer of his arrival. When Duponceau landed in his red coat, he was at first taken for an enemy, but he hastily showed that he bore a message from friends. General Langdon received him cordially and returned with him to the ship to take off his distinguished guest.

Says Duponceau: "It was a fine, clear, bright, sunshiny day. Nature had put on her gaudiest attire, no doubt to receive me, and she presented to me on the beach, a beautiful Hebe in a scarlet cloak, to welcome me with a kiss."[1]

With this kiss, Duponceau also won a bet from the Baron's aide-de-camp, De Pontière, that he would kiss the first American woman he should meet. He frankly told the lady of the scarlet cloak about the wager, and as he was an attractive boy of seventeen, she permitted him to win his bet.

In his letter to Chancellor Frank, the Baron gives the following description of his reception at the little seaport of Portsmouth:

> General Langdon, the commander, came on board himself, to take me and my officers ashore in his boat. While we were landing, we were saluted by the guns from the fortress, and from all the ships in the port. Several thousand of the inhabitants welcomed me in the most flattering manner. Mr. Langdon took us to his house to dine; in the meantime all the inhabitants of the place crowded together as if to look at a rhinoceros.
>
> Although exhausted by the hardships of the voyage, I went the next day to examine the fortifications; on the following day I re-

viewed the troops of the garrison, and on the fourth day I set out for Boston by land.[2]

Upon landing at Portsmouth, Steuben first heard the great news that Burgoyne had surrendered at Saratoga about six weeks before his arrival. This event changed the whole complexion of the war. No doubt he feared that final victory would come before he could do his part toward erecting the *grand édifice* of American liberty.

2

THE Baron actually spent eleven days in Portsmouth while De Francy was procuring baggage wagons and saddle horses. On December 6 he sent the following letter to the Continental Congress:

> Honorable Gentlemen:
>
> The honor of serving a respectable Nation, engaged in the noble enterprize of defending its rights and liberty, is the only motive that brought me over to this Continent. *I ask neither riches nor titles. I am come here from the remotest end of Germany at my own expence, and have given up an honorable and lucrative rank. I have made no condition with your Deputies in France, nor shall I make any with you.** My only ambition is to serve you as a Volunteer, to deserve the confidence of your General in Chief, and to follow him in his operations, as I have done during seven campaigns with the King of Prussia. Two and twenty years past, in such a school, seem to give me a right of thinking myself in the number of experienced officers; and if I am Possessor of some talents in the Art of War, they should be much dearer to me, if I could employ them in the service of a Republick, such as I hope soon to see America. I should willingly purchase at my Blood's Expence, the honor of seeing one Day my Name after those of the Defenders of your Liberty. Your gracious acceptance will be sufficient for me, and I ask no other favour than to be received among your Officers. I dare hope you will agree [to] this my Request, and that you will be so good as to send me your Orders to Boston, where I shall expect them, and accordingly take convenient measures.[3]

* The italics are mine.

The foregoing letter was adroitly calculated to make a favorable impression upon the Continental Congress. The promotion of DeKalb, Lafayette, Conway and other foreigners had caused great dissatisfaction among the officers of the army. Congress was disgusted with the pretensions of the foreign officers, many of whom were needy and self-seeking adventurers. Here, however, was an opulent nobleman of the highest military rank, the right-hand man of the greatest captain of the age, who sought only to serve the cause of liberty without any demand for rank or pay.

This was a brilliant political gesture on Steuben's part, but accomplished courtier though he was, he could not have achieved it, unaided, at the very moment of his arrival in a strange country. He had no knowledge of English. His secretary knew some English, but it is unthinkable that the callow and inexperienced Duponceau could have drafted such a letter. Who then composed it? To my mind there can be but one answer. It reveals the sage wisdom and finesse of Benjamin Franklin himself. It must have been forged as one of the essential links in the chain of the great plot before Steuben left Paris.

And the gesture succeeded. The Baron's letter reached the president of Congress January 12, 1778. Two days later, notwithstanding its hostile attitude toward all other foreign officers, Congress passed the following resolution:

> *Whereas* the Baron *Steuben*, a lieut. general in foreign service, has, in a most disinterested & heroic manner, offered his services to these states in the quality of a volunteer:
>
> *Resolved*, That the President present the thanks of Congress, in behalf of these United States, to the Baron Steuben, for the zeal he has shown for the cause of America & the disinterested tender he has been pleased to make of his military talents: and inform him that Congress cheerfully accept of his service as a volunteer in the army of these states and wish him to repair to gen^{l} Washington's quarters as soon as convenient.

The original text of the foregoing resolution bears marks of revision. As first written in the Journal of Congress it describes the Baron as a lieutenant general "in the armies of the King of Prussia." Later this phrase was lined out and replaced by "in foreign service." This was a prudent change. It may have been made at the instance of Robert Morris or some other member who was initiated in the plot, or possibly it was suggested by the Baron himself when he arrived at York. As originally written the falsehood was too palpable to be durable. Franklin and Deane had overdone it just a little in their letters. But the original language had spread throughout the country before the resolution was corrected. Congress took pains to correct the official record but found it profitable not to suppress the popular rumor.

In a letter transmitting a copy of the resolutions, Henry Laurens, the president of Congress, addressed the nation's guest as follows:

> His Excellency, General Washington, who is encamped at Valley Forge will be apprized of your Excellency's intention to join him. I am persuaded it will afford the General great pleasure to meet your Excellency with the best reception his Circumstances and situation will admit of.

President Laurens was a great stickler for the official proprieties. He was careful to address the Baron as "Your Excellency" because that title always goes with the grade of lieutenant general. Later, when Laurens learned the facts about the lieutenant generalcy, it irked him much that he had been so lavish with his "Excellencies."

While he was detained at Portsmouth, the Baron also wrote to General Washington:

> Sir:—The inclosed copy of a Letter, the Original of which [Franklin's letter of introduction] I shall have the honour to present to your Excellency, will instruct you of the motives that brought me over to this Land. I shall only add to it, that the Object of my greatest ambition is to render your Country all the Services in my Power, and to deserve the title of a Citizen of America, by fighting for the Cause of your liberty.

*If the distinguished ranks in which I have Served in Europe should be an Obstacle, I had rather serve under your Excellency as a Volunteer, than to be a subject of Discontent to such deserving Officers as have already distinguished themselves amongst you.**

Such being the Sentiments I have always profest, I dare hope that the respectable Congress of the United States of America, will accept my Services. I could say moreover, (were it not for the fear of offending your Modesty), that your Excellency is the only Person, under whom, after having served the King of Prussia, I could wish to pursue an Art, to which I have wholly given up myself.

I intend to go to Boston in a few Days, where I shall present my letters to the Hon^{ble} John Hancock, Esq., member of Congress, and there I shall wait your Excellency's Orders.

Here again the Baron must have had inspired guidance. In this letter he presented himself to Washington quite as happily as he had presented himself to Congress. The italicized paragraph would appeal to all of the officers of the army as well as to the commander in chief. When he received this letter, Washington was at the height of his irritation and disgust with foreigners. Just then he was contending with the so-called Conway Cabal. He had recommended that an inspectorship be formed for the improvement of the army. Congress had established the inspectorship but, through the influence of Gates and his friends, had given the new office to Conway, Washington's inveterate enemy. And now, as if by miracle, a very master of the art of war, the loyal and trusted servant of Frederick the Great, offered to serve him purely as a volunteer, waiving all embarrassing claims to rank or pay. Washington sorely needed just such a man, but with his characteristic caution, he replied:

Head Quarters, Valley Forge,
9th Jan'y, 1778

Sir:—I yesterday rec'd the honor of yours from Portsmouth inclosing the Copy of a letter from Messrs Franklin and Deane, the original of wch I shall be glad to receive from your Hands as soon as it is convenient for you to undertake the Journey.

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* The italics are mine.

As it will lay solely with Congress to make a suitable provision for you in the American Army, you will be under the necessity of prolonging your Journey in order to lay before them at York Town* the honorable testimonials which you bear of your former service.

I return you my thanks for the polite manner in which you express your desire of serving under me and have the honor to be, Sir, etc.

Before leaving Portsmouth, the Baron sent another inspired letter to Robert Morris:

The letters from Messrs Deane and Rodrigue Hortalez & Co. whose originals I shall have the honor to give you myself, and whose copies are here enclosed, as well as this of a Letter from your Commissioners in France to the Hon^{ble} Gen^{l} Washington, will instruct you of my project and Views. Being directed to you,† Sir, I hope you will be so good as to help me with your counsels and assistance in the Accomplishment of my Wishes.[4] . . .

---

* York, Pennsylvania.

† As we shall see presently, Franklin had prudently arranged for his protégé to report to Morris for a final bit of coaching and priming just before presenting himself to Congress.

CHAPTER XVIII

BOSTON AND THE JOURNEY SOUTHWARD

1

STEUBEN arrived in Boston on December 14. He was detained there nearly five weeks awaiting orders from Congress and the completion of arrangements for his journey to the southward. While in the city he was hospitably received by Governor John Hancock and other distinguished citizens. Duponceau accompanied him everywhere as an interpreter and not always to his principal's satisfaction. The young Frenchman was full of curiosity and he confesses that the Baron frequently had to reprimand him for conversing on his own account without due regard to his subordinate role as interpreter.

Duponceau gives us the following glimpses of the Baron's sojourn in Boston:

> Once at a dinner given by Governor Hancock to General Steuben, I sat next to Samuel Adams, and happened by mistake to call him Mr. John Adams. "Sir," said he, looking sternly at me, "I would have you to know that there is a great difference between Mr. *Samuel* Adams (striking his breast and laying a strong emphasis on the word Samuel), and Mr. John Adams." This remark let me into the little jealousies that then existed between some of the great men of the day. . . .
>
> We lodged as boarders at the house of a Mrs. Downe [the widow of a British officer], a respectable lady, with two beautiful and amiable daughters; the eldest Miss Betsy, about 19, and the youngest, Miss Sally 16 years of age. There were no other boarders in the house but Baron Steuben and his family* and we were kindly and hospitably treated. . . . I assure you that I did not fail to take advantage of my fortunate situation; being the only person

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* A third French staff officer, Captain de L'Enfant, joined the Baron while he was in Boston.

in our company who could speak the language of the country. I interpreted, it is true, (as in duty bound) between the Baron and the old lady; and transmitted, some times, a few compliments from him to the young ones; but I left my brother beaux to shift for themselves. There they stood, or sat, like Indians and could talk only by signs. But the ladies had not studied hieroglyphics, and I had the field all to myself.[1] . . .

2

THE government took immediate steps to provide for the Baron's journey to York, as a guest of the nation. The resolution of Congress was immediately forwarded by President Laurens with the following letter to General Heath, the Continental commander at Boston:

> Under your cover I take the liberty of putting two Packets for Baron Steuben. . . . The Baron has not applied to Congress for any kind of assistance to bring him forward on his Journey. Possibly he may have expected the offer in our part as a thing of Course. Therefore I request you, Sir, to make him a tender of money & afford him such aids as shall be suitable to his Rank & occasions—this I judge to be consistent with the honour of Congress & have no doubt of their approbation, but tis now past Midnight, the Messenger will take his dispatches by the dawn of tomorrow, therefore I shall not have opportunity to apply for formal Resolve for the purpose but I will be answerable for all disbursements which you may think necessary & proper to make & repay them with thanks in such manner as you shall direct.[2]

But Steuben became impatient and left Boston long before Laurens' letter could reach him. Governor Hancock advanced him $1,300 for his travel expenses and $200 for the purchase of a saddle horse. The State of Connecticut also advanced him $800.[3]

In describing the preparations for his journey to Chancellor Frank, the Baron probably employed a little embroidery:

> Mr. Hancock himself, with great care, made all the necessary arrangements. Carriages, sleighs, and saddle horses were pro-

cured. Five negroes were assigned to us as grooms and drivers, also an agent to prepare quarters and procure provisions. As I had left Paris with only one servant and a cook, I engaged two English servants as field equipage for me and my officers.[4]

While the Baron was in Boston, he and his staff officers relinquished their scarlet coats and assumed the blue and buff of the Continental Army. Whether he bought new uniforms outright, or relied upon some Yankee dyer to rectify his colors, I do not know.

3

DUPONCEAU describes the parting with Mistress Downe as follows:

> The bill at parting was very moderate, but there were two items in it, which excited the anger of the good Baron, and made him ejaculate more than once "Diable, Diable" and "Tertifle" [der Teufel?] The first of these charges was "to a dog" which in my opinion was a very just and correct one. The Baron had brought with him his favorite dog, Azor, a fine, large, Italian greyhound who ate as much as anyone of us. Why the charge was objected to, I cannot well conceive. It is probable that in Germany, dogs go every where Scot-free. The other charge was rather extraordinary but under the circumstances a very just one. It was "to trouble." I cannot recollect how much the charge amounted to, but it appeared to me very moderate. Only fancy to yourself; an old German Baron, with a large brilliant star on his breast, three French aides-de-camp and a large, spoiled Italian dog. None of all that company [except Duponceau] could speak a word of English. . . . We gave "trouble" enough to the good lady: and though I see in her charge much *naiveté*, I cannot conceive it a symptom of avarice. Had she had a little of what is (I do not know why) called Yankee cunning, she would have dropped these charges and obtained her end, by swelling a little the more usual ones.[5]

His Excellency, the lieutenant general, and his retinue set out from Boston on January 14. Duponceau gives us the following glimpses of the journey:

We travelled on horseback. Notwithstanding the recent capture of Burgoyne, the situation of the United States at that time was extremely critical. The enemy was in possession of Rhode Island, New York and Philadelphia, with well-organized and disciplined troops, far superior in number to our own. Our army (if army it might be called) were encamped at Valley Forge, in the depth of a severe winter, without provisions, without clothes, without regular discipline, destitute in short of every thing but courage and patriotism; and what was worse than all, disaffection was spreading through the land. In this dismal state of things, the Baron was advised to keep as far from the coast as possible, lest he should be surprised by parties of the enemy or by Tories, who made frequent incursions into the country between New York and Philadelphia. We therefore shaped our course westward and . . . employed about three weeks in a journey of four hundred and ten miles in all, which at present [1836] would hardly require as many days. . . .

We had been cautioned against putting up at a certain tavern in Worcester County, Massachusetts, not far from the frontier of Connecticut. We were told that the landlord was a bitter Tory, and that he would refuse to receive us, or, at least, treat us very ill. We determined to avoid that place if it were possible. Unfortunately when we were some distance from it we were surprised by a violent snow storm; it was in the evening, and were compelled to seek shelter in the very house we wished to avoid. We had not been misinformed. The landlord at once said that he could not accommodate us. He had no beds, no bread, no meat, no drink, no milk, no eggs; all that he could offer us was the bare walls. In vain we remonstrated and prayed. He remained inflexible. At last the Baron grew impatient and flew into a violent passion. After exhausting all his store of German oaths, he called in that language to his servant to bring his pistols. Then the Baron, presenting the deadly weapons at the frightened landlord, repeated the questions that he had in vain asked before: "Have you bread, meat, drink, beds, etc.?" The answers were now such as we desired; we were accommodated with good beds, and a good supper and our horses were properly cared for. In the morning after our breakfast, we politely took leave of our host, who, though a Tory, did not refuse the continental money in which we liberally paid him.[6] . . .

4

THE newspapers heralded the Baron's progress in items such as the following: "Worcester, Jan. 22. On Saturday last [January 17], passed through this town on the way to Congress, Baron de Steuben, General Quartermaster and late aid-de-camp to the King of Prussia, and his attendants."

The party stopped at Springfield on the eighteenth and at Hartford on the twentieth. On the twenty-eighth, the Baron was ferried across the Hudson at Fishkill. He arrived at Reading, Pennsylvania, on February 2 and at Manheim on the fourth. There he presented his letters to Robert Morris who gave him the latest news of the military and political situation and prepared him for his negotiations with Congress. Immediately after this meeting, Morris wrote to President Laurens:

> The Baron de Steuben, so warmly recommended by Doct^{r} Franklin and Mr. Deane, as well as by Mess^{rs} Roderique Hortalez & Co., having done me the honor to call on his way to Congress, delivered me the inclosed letters, copies of which I took the liberty to forward to your Excellency some time since, but still think it necessary to send the originals least those copies might be mislaid.
>
> Doctor Franklin writes in very strong terms of this gent^{ns} military Experience and Talents to Mr. Bache* now here & at whose desire I mention it: having served so long as twenty years under so great a master as the King of Prussia one cannot but entertain expectations that the Baron must be capable of rendering important services to this Country, otherways the Art military is not acquired by Opportunity & Experience alone.[7]

Morris also replenished the Baron's pocketbook by honoring Beaumarchais' draft for fifty louis d'or.

Steuben had now been in America more than two months. His overland journey had given him first-hand knowledge of the country and its people. He had traveled from New Hampshire to Pennsylvania. He had traversed the valleys of the Merrimack and the Connecticut. With the eyes of a trained general staff officer he had appraised the great strategic lines of the Hudson and the Delaware. He had been received with distinguished honors by the leading men in each community. The plan of operations prepared for him by Franklin and Deane had been brought up to date by their correspondents, Morris and Bache. He would now meet the leaders of Congress with no mean knowledge of the theater of war and the political situation.

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* Richard Bache, Franklin's son-in-law.

CHAPTER XIX

RECEPTION BY CONGRESS

1

HIS Excellency, Lieutenant General Baron de* Steuben made his entry into the city of York on February 5. As we have seen, his advent at Portsmouth and his progress through the country had been skilfully advertized. He therefore came to the American capital with all of the prestige that his co-plotters in Paris had contrived for him. According to Richard Peters, then a member of the Board of War, he was "received by Congress with every mark of distinction" and "more particular attention . . . than I had known given to any foreigner."[1] Duponceau informs us that General Gates invited him to be his personal guest while at York. But the Baron was too prudent to make so entangling an alliance. Thanks to John Hancock and Robert Morris he was initiated into the mystery of the Gates-Conway cabal against Washington. He therefore established himself with his staff in the mansion that Hancock had occupied, until recently, as president of Congress.[2]

Though Steuben's services had already been accepted by special resolution, a committee was now appointed to pay him the compliments of Congress and to ascertain his wishes. The next day, the members of the committee, the Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon of New Jersey, John Henry of Maryland, Thomas McKean of Delaware and Francis Lightfoot Lee of Virginia "waited upon" the distinguished foreigner in his lodgings. As the Baron spoke no English, the interview was in French, the Reverend Dr. Witherspoon acting as interpreter as well as chairman of the committee.[3]

After the usual courtesies, the committee inquired as to the conditions under which the Baron desired to serve and whether

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* The Baron, while in America, always used the French "de" instead of its German equivalent "von."

"he had made any stipulations with the Commissioners in France." To this he replied that he had made no agreement with them and that he did not seek any rank or pay. He wished only to join the army as a volunteer and to render such services as General Washington might think him capable of.[4]

This singularly disinterested attitude, so unlike that of most foreign officers, made a profound impression upon the committee. But its members were even more impressed by the Baron's generous and sportsmanlike financial proposals. He informed them that he had no other fortune than a revenue of about six hundred guineas arising from places and posts of honor in Germany. As he had been obliged to relinquish this income in order to come to America, he expected that the United States would defray his necessary expenses while in their service as a volunteer. Any further expectations he made contingent upon his success in advancing the American cause. If the States should not win their independence or if his services should not be effective, in either of these cases he would consider the United States free of any obligation to him. But if the United States should win their freedom and his services should be recognized as contributory to that end, he would then expect full indemnification for the sacrifices he made in coming to America and such "further marks of their generosity as the justice of the United States should dictate." If these terms were agreeable to Congress, he was prepared to join the army without delay. As Steuben wrote later in a memorial to Congress:

> . . . The Committee was pleased to applaud the generosity of his propositions in thus risking his fortune on that of the United States. The committee then left him in order to make their report. The next day, Congress gave him an entertainment: after which, the President, Mr. Laurens, told him it was the desire of Congress that he should join the army immediately.[5] . . .

2

As orders to join the army immediately followed the committee's report, the Baron assumed that his terms had been accepted. He therefore believed that Congress was bound by the following verbal contract:*

> While serving as a volunteer, his necessary expenses would be borne by the Government:
>
> Should he contribute effectively to the success of the American cause, he would be entitled to reimbursement for the expenses of his journey to America, and to indemnification for an income of about six hundred guineas from the summer of 1777 until the date of his discharge from the American Army—with interest:
>
> Thereafter, he would be entitled to that same income until the end of his life, or to the capital value of such an annuity.

The committee did not ask the Baron to specify the "places and posts of honor" from which he had drawn the relinquished revenues. Nor did it require a statement as to the specific revenue derived from each source. It accepted his financial status as it accepted his exalted military rank—without question. To haggle with so distinguished a benefactor upon so generous a proposal would be beneath the dignity of the gentlemen of the committee and of the nation they served. And besides, it would be impossible for the United States to be a loser under the terms of the contract. Even so good a Presbyterian as the Reverend Dr. John Witherspoon, professor of theology and president of the college at Princeton, was too patriotic to reject so good a gambling proposition. Congress would not only hold the stakes but would be the sole judge as to whether the Baron had won his wager.

In view of the public sentiment against foreign officers at that time, it is obvious that Steuben employed the only possible means of entering the American Army and of procuring eventual compensation for his services. His assumption of fictitious rank in Paris; his Portsmouth letter announcing his "sacrifice of honorable and lucrative rank" in Europe in order to serve as an unpaid volunteer in America; and, finally, his sportsmanlike but shrewd proposals to the Witherspoon committee, are all bound together in strict dramatic unity. We have seen that the Baron was a skilful actor throughout the play. But who was the dramatist? Could a Prussian soldier of fortune, completely ignorant of our language, create a plot and a role so informed with intimate understanding of the American character and of the whole American scene? Impossible. In my opinion we find here the unmistakable stagecraft of Benjamin Franklin. His dramaturgy was clearly revealed in the opening scene in Paris. Who else could have composed the lines that the Baron followed so consistently to the end of the play? No one, not even Beaumarchais.

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* Peters and other friends blamed him for not insisting that this contract be reduced to writing.[6]

Franklin discovered Steuben and recognized his merit after he had been ordered to send no more foreign officers to America. He must therefore contrive some means of securing a nationwide welcome for this particular foreigner in spite of the opposition of the Continental Army, the Continental Congress and the American people. This was a tough job in diplomacy even for Benjamin. But he accomplished it. And here he made one of his most effective contributions toward the success of the American cause.

Before leaving York, the Baron stipulated that his staff officers should be given appropriate commissions in the American Army. De Pontière, Duponceau and De L'Enfant thus became captains. The Board of War also advanced him $500 on account of future expenses. This was a great comfort to the Baron. The funds advanced him by Hortalez & Co., by Governor Hancock and by the State of Connecticut were running low. He had an extensive suite of retainers, and travel in keeping with his high rank was expensive. He had learned the grand manner when he traveled with His Serene Highness, the Prince of Hohenzollern.

3

HAVING concluded his business with Congress, Steuben set out for Valley Forge on February 19, bearing the following letter from President Laurens to Washington:

> This will be delivered to your Excellency by the Baron Stüben. . . . Upon the arrival of this illustrious stranger at Yorktown, Congress appointed a Committee . . . to wait upon and confer with him, to pay the necessary Compliments on his appearance in America and to learn explicitly his Expectations from Congress, and the Committee were directed to deliver me the substance of their conference in writing, to be transmitted for your Excellency's information. All that I have received or know on this head will be seen on an Inclosed paper marked Committees conference with Baron Stüben to which I beg leave to refer your Excellency.[7] . . .

The committee report mentioned in the letter follows:

> The Baron Stüben who was a Lieutenant General and Aide de Camp to the King of Prussia—desires no rank—is willing to attend General Washington, and be subject to his orders—does not require or desire any command of a particular Corps or Division, but will serve occasionally as directed by the General—Expects to be of use in planning Encampments, &c and promoting the discipline of the Army—He heard before he left France, of the dissatisfaction of the Americans with the promotion of Foreign Officers, therefore makes no terms, nor will accept of anything but with the general approbation and particularly that of General Washington.[8]

President Laurens also gave the Baron a personal letter of introduction to his son, Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, who was then an aide-de-camp on Washington's staff.

On the way from York to Valley Forge the Baron stopped at Lancaster, a prosperous German settlement, at that time the largest inland town in the United States. Says Duponceau:

> Having arrived there early in the afternoon, the Baron was waited on by Colonel Gibson and other gentlemen, who invited him and his family to a subscription ball to take place that evening, in honor of his arrival. The baron accepted and we accordingly went. There we saw assembled all the fashion and beauty of Lancaster and its vicinity. The baron was delighted to converse with the Ger-

man girls in his native tongue. There was a handsome supper and the company did not separate until two o'clock the next morning.[9]

Among the young officers who attended this ball was Captain William North. This is the "Billy North" who later became the Baron's aide-de-camp, closest friend, and adopted son. North writes of this first meeting with his future chief:

> I saw him for the first time at a ball which the citizens of Lancaster gave him. He had been received in the most distinguished manner by Congress, and was then on his way to meet General Washington. His reputation had preceded him, and those who yet remember his graceful entry, and carriage in a ballroom, the splendor of his Star and its accompaniments, can easily conceive the proud feelings of his countrymen, and their fair wives and daughters. With honest feeling, they might have thanked God, that they had no reason to be ashamed of their countryman.[10]

CHAPTER XX

RECEPTION BY WASHINGTON

1

THE Baron arrived at Valley Forge on February 23. His own account of his reception appears in his letter to Chancellor Frank:

> Upon my arrival at the camp, I was again the object of more honors than I was entitled to. General Washington came several miles to meet me on the road, and accompanied me to my quarters, where I found an officer with twenty-five men as guard of honor. When I declined this, saying that I wished to be considered merely as a volunteer, the general answered me in the politest words, that "The whole army would be gratified to stand sentinels for such volunteers." . . . On the same day my name was given as watchword. The following day the army was mustered, and General Washington accompanied me to review it. To be brief, if Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, or the greatest field marshal of Europe, had been in my place, he could not have been received with greater marks of honor than I was.[1]

This tale of Steuben's reception at Valley Forge was accepted by Kapp as authentic and has been repeated by all of the later biographers. But as usual with the Baron's reminiscences, there is more or less embroidery in it. The honors paid him, as he describes them, were proper enough for a foreign visitor of such high rank and prestige. But I have found no trace of them in the records. In fact, a ceremonial review of the troops at Valley Forge in midwinter, 1778, is highly improbable. The army was in great distress at that time. The soldiers were ill fed, ill clad and ill shod. The regiments were depleted and nearly half of the men were confined to their huts from lack of breeches and shoes. It was indeed an army of sans-culottes with barely enough soldiers fit for the necessary guard and fatigue duties. Washington's order book gives the "watchword" (parole) for every day, but it was not recorded as "Steuben" until nearly a month later. The letter to Frank was not written as source material for future historians. It was written for the eyes of an old German friend, by a homesick brother German, who was doing his best to whistle up his courage in his loneliness. When the Baron wrote that letter to Frank more than a year after his arrival at Valley Forge, he had written him four earlier letters and had received no answer. Since his humiliating departure from Baden, he had had no friendly word from home.

If not quite so ceremonious as Steuben describes it, Washington's welcome was cordial and genuine. In fact he had been awaiting his guest with peculiar interest ever since he received the Baron's Portsmouth letter. He was looking for a man to fill a position of critical importance to his army and he had strong hopes that this distinguished servant of Frederick the Great would prove to be the man he sought. But it was characteristic of Washington to keep his own council until he could judge the man himself with his own eyes. The Baron had also announced his advent to Congress and Congress had responded with a hasty resolution accepting his services. Washington was not so impulsive. He contented himself with a courteous invitation to his headquarters. And now the Baron had arrived. Washington received him cordially but appraised him carefully. He had several conferences with him in which his aide-de-camp, John Laurens, acted as interpreter. On the whole, his first impressions were favorable. Four days after his guest's arrival he wrote to President Laurens: "Baron Steuben has arrived at Camp. He appears to be much of a gentleman, and as far as I have had an opportunity of judging, a man of military knowledge and acquainted with the world."

2

In order to understand the reasons for Washington's peculiar interest in Steuben's arrival, it will be necessary to give some account of the critical situation that confronted him when he read the Baron's letter on January 8. Just at that time his most cherished plan for the improvement of the army had gone awry. His campaign of 1777 had been unsuccessful. He had lost the battles of Brandywine and Germantown and the enemy now occupied Philadelphia, the seat of government. With depleted forces Washington was immobile at Valley Forge, the very security of his army depending upon the slothful inactivity of the enemy. His defeats had been due to the defective training and maneuver power of his army. He realized this fully and was determined to correct the defect before the opening of the next campaign. He had repeatedly referred the subject of training to the consideration of his general officers. He had consulted DeKalb, Du Coudray, Pulaski, Conway, D'Arendt and other foreign officers in order to profit by the best European experience.

Baron d'Arendt first suggested a practical solution. He proposed that a special agency, charged with the training and discipline of the army, should be formed on Washington's staff. The head of this new staff department, to be known as the inspector general, would prepare a system of drill regulations and supervise their execution. Assistant inspectors in the several brigades and divisions would supervise the drill and thus insure uniformity through the army. Washington had always appreciated the importance of training but with his multitudinous administrative duties, he had never had time to give it his personal attention.

3

BARON D'ARENDT's proposal immediately appealed to Washington's common sense. It was an obvious principle of good organization that so important a function as the training of the army should be entrusted to officers who were free from all other responsibilities. And Washington found another great practical advantage in the plan. It would enable him to find profitable employment for the best of the foreign officers. There was a strong prejudice against giving them the command of troops, but there was no objection to assigning them to duty as training experts. The American generals recognized that professional soldiers were better skilled than themselves in the technique of military training.

Toward the end of October, while Steuben was on the high seas, Washington had submitted the question of the inspectorship to a board comprising all of the general officers present at headquarters—five major generals and ten brigadiers. The proposal met with their unanimous approval which they expressed in their report as follows: "Such an office is adviseable; the manual, maneuvres or any regulations to be established, previously to be settled by the commander in chief, or a board of officers, appointed by him for that purpose."

Among the generals who considered this important question and signed the report were three foreigners, Major General Lafayette and Brigadier Generals Pulaski and Conway.

Having fortified his opinion by that of his generals, Washington wrote to the president of Congress recommending the immediate establishment of the inspectorship. But this was followed by difficulties and delays. The question was referred to the Board of War, which was just then the center of the Gates-Conway faction. It was therefore strongly influenced by the men who sought to oust Washington from command and to replace him by Gates, the conqueror of Burgoyne. On December 12, the Board of War adopted a plan prepared by General Conway.[2] Under this plan the new inspector general would be independent of the commander in chief and would function directly under the Board of War. It was thus calculated to undermine Washington's command of his own army by creating what John Marshall called an *imperium in imperio*. But even this humiliation was not enough. The Board of War not only secured the adoption of Conway's vicious plan, but procured the appointment of Conway himself as inspector general.[3] The whole proceeding was conceived and consummated as a direct affront to the commander in chief. It was an essential part of a machinery designed to drive him from the service of the country.

4

WE can imagine Washington's indignation when the action of the Board of War became known to him. His cherished inspectorship was to become an agency for his own destruction. It was impossible for him to coöperate with his inveterate enemy. Conway went to Valley Forge to undertake the duties of his new office. He was received by the commander in chief with cold courtesy and by the other generals with open contempt. The atmosphere of the headquarters was too frigid for him. So, after writing a patronizing and offensive letter to Washington on December 31, he returned to York and complained of his reception. On January 3 Washington wrote to the president of Congress:

> If General Conway means, by cool receptions . . . that I did not receive him in the language of a warm and cordial friend, I readily confess the charge. I did not, nor shall I ever, till I am capable of the arts of dissimulation. These I despise, and my feelings will not permit me to make professions of friendship to the man I deem my enemy and whose system of conduct forbids it. At the same time truth authorizes me to say, that he was received and treated with the proper respect to his official character, and that he has had no cause to justify the assertion, that he could not expect any support for fulfilling the duties of his appointment.

Four days after writing the foregoing passage, Washington received Steuben's Portsmouth letter with a copy of Benjamin Franklin's note of introduction.* Here, apparently, was an intervention of Providence. Here was a distinguished foreign expert who sought neither rank nor pay, who understood and respected the feelings of the American officers, who sought only the honor of serving under him as a volunteer. Here was a professional soldier whose rank, experience and professional prestige completely overshadowed Conway's. In reading this disinterested letter from the close friend and right-hand man of Frederick the Great, Washington must have smiled with grim humor as he recalled an offensive passage in Conway's recent letter, sarcastically referring to Washington as the military peer of Frederick the Great. Conway had written: "We know only the *great Frederick* in Europe and the *great Washington* in this continent. I certainly was never so rash as to pretend to such a prodigious height." And now behold the *alter ego* of the "great Frederick" was actually coming to the aid of the "great Washington." And he must have found another ground for wry amusement in his memory of Conway. That volatile Irish-Frenchman had strongly insisted that the Prussian system of drill and maneuver should be adopted in the American Army. He commended it as the newest type of military efficiency, superior in every respect to both the English and the French disciplines. If this medicine had such sovereign virtues, why not receive it in its pure essence from a Prussian expert rather than in an adulterated form from a Frenchman who had been so roughly physicked by it at the battle of Rossbach?

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* In order to understand the effect of these documents on Washington, it will be worth while to reread them at this time. For Steuben's letter, see page 114, *supra*. Franklin's letter is on page 96.

Perhaps this distinguished volunteer would be the very man he needed for the training of his army. He was at least worth waiting for. But Washington kept the project in his own breast. He had suffered much from highly advertised and plausible foreign adventurers. He recalled, no doubt with chagrin, that even Conway had impressed him favorably at first and that he had written to Congress expressing his pleasure at receiving him. He would await the Baron's visit to headquarters and then he would appraise him with his own eyes and ears.

5

IN John Laurens' letters to his father we have a number of glimpses of Steuben at Valley Forge. Immediately after the Baron's arrival he wrote:

> I have barely time to thank you for your kind favor of the eighteenth, and the pleasure of Baron Steuben's acquaintance. Nothing

> that depends on me shall be wanting to make his stay in camp agreeable, and if he enters into service to make myself useful to him.[4]

A few days later, he wrote more fully:

> My dear Father:—I was obliged to write briefly and in haste by the last courier. I have since had several long conversations with the Baron Steuben, who appears to me a man profound in the science of war, and well disposed to render his best services to the United States.
>
> In an interview between him and the general, at which I assisted in quality of interpreter, he declared that he had purposely waved making any contract with Congress, previous to his having made some acquaintance with the Commander in Chief, in order that he might avoid giving offence to the officers of the army, and that the general might decide, in what post he could be most useful. . . .
>
> I think he would be the properest man we could choose for the office of inspector general, and there are several good assistants that might be given him. I have the highest opinion of the service he would render in this line, as he seems to be perfectly aware of the disadvantages under which our army has labored from short enlistments and frequent changes; *seems to understand what our soldiers are capable of, and is not so staunch a systematist as to be averse from adapting established forms to stubborn circumstances. He will not give us the perfect instructions absolutely speaking, but the best which we are in a condition to receive.*[5] . . .

I have italicized a passage of this letter. It is highly significant that, so early, John Laurens should have pointed out Steuben's gift of adaptability, so remarkable in a Prussian veteran. The Baron saw that it would be his mission not to introduce, but to adapt the Prussian system. This freedom from professional pedantry impressed Washington greatly. Most of the other foreign officers were rigid professional pedants.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BARON AT VALLEY FORGE[1]

1

WASHINGTON gave Steuben every opportunity to study the actual state of the army at Valley Forge. He arranged for him to visit the several regiments, and requested him to note defects and shortcomings and to advise him frankly as to the best measures for reform. In making these informal inspections, the Baron was greatly handicapped by his ignorance of the English language. It is true that Duponceau accompanied him as an interpreter, but the young Frenchman had little knowledge of military affairs or of American customs. Washington therefore gave him the assistance of his youthful aides-de-camp, John Laurens and Alexander Hamilton.* Both could speak French and both were ardent admirers of the Baron. They were assisted also by Major General Nathanael Greene, the ablest soldier in the army, who from the first was always Steuben's devoted friend.

In his rides through the camp, the Baron made a fine impression on officers and men. He was an accomplished horseman. Young Private Ashbel Greene saw him a little later and never forgot him. In his old age, as Bishop Ashbel Greene, he wrote:

> Never before, or since, have I had such an impression of the ancient fabled God of War as when I looked on the baron: he seemed to me a perfect personification of Mars. The trappings of his horse, the enormous holsters of his pistols, his large size, and his strikingly martial aspect, all seemed to favor the idea.[2]†

His martial bearing, the brilliant uniform, the star of knighthood gleaming upon his breast, appealed to every eye. But his prestige as the close comrade in arms of Frederick the Great, the greatest captain of the age, made an even greater impression. And these advantages were enhanced by his gracious and engaging manners, his unfailing good nature, and his sense of humor.

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* Hamilton was just twenty-one. Laurens was three years older.

† The Baron's "large size" was, more or less, an illusion in the eyes of Ashbel Greene. As a matter of fact, he was a man of middle height. Like General Sheridan, he had relatively short legs and a relatively long body. This made him appear to be a bigger man on horseback than on the ground.

He conferred with the general of each brigade and division, and with the colonel of each regiment. With the company officers, he visited the huts of the half-clad soldiers and learned their sufferings from their own lips. He inspected their rusty and neglected weapons. Though he was impressed by the sufferings of the army at Valley Forge, he was even more impressed by the fortitude of the common soldiers, their devotion to their cause and their faith and confidence in Washington. In these half-trained, ill-clad men the Baron recognized a soldiery superior to any he had ever seen. He reported to Washington that no army in Europe would hold together and endure under such deprivations of food and clothing and shelter.

2

WASHINGTON kept close touch with the progress of Steuben's investigations. There were conferences almost every day at headquarters and more intimate conversations at Washington's private quarters where the Baron and Duponceau dined two or three times a week with the General and Mrs. Washington. On March 9 John Laurens wrote to his father:

> The Ambition of serving my Country, and the desire of gaining fame, leads me to wish for the command of men. I would cherish those dear ragged Continentals, whose patience will be the admiration of future ages, and glory in bleeding with them. . . .
>
> The Baron Steuben has had the fortune to please uncommonly, for a stranger, at first sight. . . . All the gen^{l} officers who have seen him are prepossessed in his favor, and conceive highly of his abilities. . . . The General seems to have a very good opinion of him, and thinks he might be usefully employed in the office of inspector general, but I fancy is cautious of recommending it to

Congress, as he might appear implacably to pursue a certain person [Conway] to whom Congress gave that post. . . . The Baron's own desire is to have the present rank and pay of Major Gen^{l}; not to have any actual command, until he is better known, and shall be better qualified by a knowledge of our language and the genius and manners of the people. Then, if any stroke is to be struck, his ambition prompts him to solicit a command.[3] . . .

When John Laurens was writing the foregoing letter Washington had already decided to intrust the Baron with the training of the troops. But he was not yet prepared to recommend his permanent appointment in the army. The office of inspector general with the rank of major general was still nominally held by Conway. To propose a special commission for Steuben as major general would probably offend the American generals. They liked the Baron and were glad to give him the precedence due to his European rank of lieutenant general, but they were still tender on the subject of having any more foreign major generals in the American service. And Washington had a further reason for deferring the preferment. He had strong hopes of the Baron's success, but he was by no means certain that he would or could make good. He decided to accept his services, but to defer official recognition until he should prove himself. He therefore asked him to serve as *acting* inspector general in his capacity as a volunteer.

Steuben understood the situation and accepted the temporary office. He hoped eventually to become a major general in the American Army as John Laurens had intimated to his father. But President Laurens evidently feared that a distinguished lieutenant general might be reluctant to accept a commission in a lower grade. In order to reassure him on this point, the Baron wrote him on March 12:

The Rank of Lieut-General, which I hold in the Circle of Suabia* cannot give me the least objection against my accepting that of Major General among you. . . . But as the Commander in Chief and the Committee of Congress are now employed in making some Changes in the Army, His Excellency has got represented to me by Col. Laurens that he desires me to Suspend for some time my requesting a commission from Congress, and I submit with the greatest Confidence to all his Desires. . . .

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* The Baron could never remember exactly where he received this commission. A few days before writing this letter to Henry Laurens he had told John Laurens that he was a lieutenant general in the service of the Margrave of Baden. The discrepancy is of minor importance, however, as there was no such grade in either service.

Yes, Sir, I'll repeat it once more. If His Excellency thinks that I may be more Useful to you as a Volunteer than as a Commissioned General, I shall willingly Submit to his Desire. I have but one only Aim, from which nothing shall ever make me Swerve. And this is to be useful to the *United States*, and to participate of the Glory of your Armies. My only Ambition is to reap Lawrels in your Fields, no matter in what rank. So you need never fear my teazing you with indiscreet requests. The Glory of America Will be Mine, and your Liberty Shall make my Happiness.

Besides, I am Extremely flattered with the Distinctions your Worthy Commander in Chief Shows me in every Occasion. My chief study Shall always be to deserve them more and more.

Your Son favours me with his Friendship, which is extremely agreeable to me. Be so good, Sir, I beseech you, as to continue to honour me with yours.[4]*

3

THE Conway incident had seriously delayed Washington's training program. The middle of March was at hand before the Baron's plan, prepared with the assistance of Greene and Hamilton, was approved. The campaign might open before the middle of May. What could be done must be done in a few weeks. The difficulties were serious. In the first place, there were no drill regulations. In fact, there was no central government with sufficient authority to prescribe them. Washington's army was not a national army. It was a loose congeries of detachments from thirteen separate sovereignties. Each state contingent followed its own military model. Some of them affected the French drill, some the Prussian and some the English. None had more than a smattering of its chosen model but each had just enough of it to stimulate a resistance to any change.

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* When the Baron signed this letter he had no knowledge of English. He probably wrote it out in French and then had it translated by a staff officer. This is true of all his official reports and important letters written in America. Most of his official letters to Washington in the Washington Papers are in the clear handwriting and terse English of Benjamin Walker: but such copies of them as are preserved in the Steuben Ms. are generally in the Baron's French. Less important letters were written by a staff officer under his chief's instructions to answer such and such a letter or to write to such and such a person on some specified subject. The Baron soon learned to read the English documents prepared for his signature but he was never able to write correct English himself.

For samples of his English after more than eight years in America, see pages 338, 343, 362, 370. After a glance at these examples, the reader will have no difficulty in determining whether the English in any other excerpt is the Baron's own or a translator's.

To correspondents who could read French, such as Peters, Hamilton, Walker, North, Lafayette, Duponceau and others, the Baron almost invariably wrote in that language.

The Baron must therefore write his own drill regulations as the drills progressed. There would be no time for digesting the system as a whole, and no time for printing. Steuben adopted the only possible expedient. He wrote his drill regulations lesson by lesson. The first lesson kept the troops busy for several days. While they were practising that lesson he wrote the next instalment.

And the composition itself was a most difficult task. The author knew only a few words of English. He wrote each of his drill instructions in French. Duponceau translated it into literary English, Laurens and Hamilton then edited Duponceau's version into military form. The result was that the author could not read or understand his own text when it was finished and placed before him. He committed the drill commands to memory, however, and recited them to his young assistants; frequently losing his temper and sprinkling his broken English with selections from his rich vocabulary of French and German profanity.

Then came the problem of distributing the drill regulations to the troops. There was no printing press with the army. There were no typewriters, no carbon paper, no mimeograph, none of the modern means of duplicating. The original draft must be copied in longhand and there must be hundreds of accurate copies, one for each officer and one for each drillmaster in the army.

This task of distribution was assigned to the new brigade inspectors. Washington had selected these young officers as the Baron's assistants, one from each of the fourteen infantry brigades. Each brigade inspector made a copy of the first chapter of the drill regulations for his own use and then had it copied in the "Orderly Book"[5] of his brigade and in that of each regiment. From the regimental "Orderly Book," copies were made for each company and from the company copy, each officer and drillmaster made his own individual copy. Time was required for this process. If the Baron finished one of his chapters, say, on Monday night, even with the utmost diligence on the part of the brigade inspectors, it would not be in the hands of all the drillmasters before Wednesday. After the drill was once started on the first chapter, the Baron was hard pressed in writing the subsequent instalments in time. As he expressed it later: "I dictated my dispositions in the night; in the day I had them performed."

4

THE method of issuing and distributing the drill regulations was satisfactory, but fortunately the Baron appreciated that this was not enough. Every practical soldier will realize that even the best drill instructions cannot be absorbed automatically throughout a command. Imagine the first drill under such conditions. There would be as many drill models as there were drillmasters. There would be no standard of uniformity. Only a few of the drillmasters would have enough imagination and initiative to make an effective start and each of these would interpret the new instructions in a different way.

The speedy introduction of a new drill system is sufficiently difficult even in an army provided with competent drillmasters. But there was no corps of effective drillmasters in the Continental Army. The Americans had unanimously adopted one feature of the English military system. It was a tradition in that service that drilling the men was a function of the sergeants and was therefore beneath the dignity of a commissioned officer. The English soldiers were well drilled without the intervention of their officers because they had competent drill sergeants. The soldiers of the Continental Army were not so favored. Their officers had all the professional dignity of their English cousins, but there was no corps of trained sergeants to perform their drill duties for them.

The Baron's method of meeting this difficulty was characteristic of his practical genius. He would appeal to the power of example—that most potent of all pedagogic principles. He would first form a model company and drill it himself. This company would thus be a "demonstration unit" for the entire army. Before issuing his first drill command, each drillmaster would see the movement executed correctly and with precision under the supervision of the Baron himself. And what a Prussian lieutenant general could do with dignity would not be beneath the dignity of a callow Yankee lieutenant. Here the Baron proposed to kill two birds with one stone. The model company would be a model for each company. And His Excellency, Lieutenant General Baron de Steuben would be a model for each drillmaster in gesture, in bearing and in ringing, musical tone of command.

Here was something that could be transmitted to all the soldiers at Valley Forge. By them it was to be transmitted to the whole Continental Army and to every American Army of the future. And indeed, the Baron's influence is still alive today. If you would catch the still surviving thrill of his personality, go to West Point some morning in mid-June when the new yearling corporals are drilling the plebe recruits. They do not know it, but each of these young drillmasters is doing his best to follow the Baron's example.

The conception of the model company was approved by the commander in chief. So on Tuesday, March 17, 1778, Washington inaugurated Steuben's training system by publishing the following paragraph in his "Order of the Day":

One Hundred chosen men are to be annexed to the Guard of the Commander in Chief for the purpose of forming a corps to be instructed in the Maneuvres to be introduced in the Army and serve as a Model for the Execution of them. As the General's guard is composed entirely of Virginians, the one hundred draughts are to be taken from the troops of the other states.

The following day, Steuben's name appeared for the first time in the general orders of the American Army. The order of the day began with the announcement: "Parole, *Steuben* . . ." Farther on in the order the following paragraph appears: "The men ordered yesterday for his Excellency's Guard are to parade tomorrow morning at Guard mounting on the Grand Parade."

CHAPTER XXII

THE MODEL COMPANY

1

THE Baron was up early the morning of Thursday, March 19. It was the critical day of his life. While his German servant, Carl Vogel, was dressing his pigtail, he smoked a pipe and drank a cup of coffee. Then he mounted his horse and rode to the Grand Parade.

The "draughts" from the regiments were waiting for him; the details from each brigade assembled under the brigade inspector. The Baron first took a small squad and began to drill it himself. The first lesson was "the position of the soldier." He had memorized the English words, but he relied more upon pantomime. He assumed the position of the soldier himself as each man imitated him. Then he moved along the front and corrected each man's bearing. Then he taught them to dress to the right and left. Then he marched them forward in slow step, singing out the cadence of the step in his strong musical voice:

Von — *Two* — TREE — *FOUR:* Von — *Two* — TREE — *FOUR*—then he taught them the halt, and the about face and then the march to the rear. Then he showed them the right face and the left face. The men learned the new movements quickly. They were all selected men, veterans. There were no raw recruits among them. The old general drilled these Yankees, just as young Lieutenant Steuben had drilled his platoon in the Lestwitz Regiment thirty years before.

While the Baron drilled his little squad the rest of the men were looking on. They followed each motion of the famous foreign general with fascinated interest. Each of these spectators thus learned his lesson with his own eyes. So, when the Baron divided the company into squads, one for each brigade inspector, the whole guard company began its drill. The Baron now moved from squad to squad, observing its progress, correcting its errors.

But by this time other spectators had gathered. Officers and men from all the regiments collected on the Grand Parade. Already the news had begun to spread. The prestige, the bearing, the magnetic personality of the instructor made the new drill a public spectacle.

When each of the squads had mastered its lesson, the Baron formed them into a complete company and took command himself. Here was one of the characteristic features of his drill program. There would be no time for the usual procedure, so many days for the squad, so many days for the platoon, so many days for the company. Each day's lesson must begin with the squad and end with the whole company. So now at the close of the morning's drill the whole Guard Company marched to the front, halted, faced to the rear and then marched back again and faced to the right and left, under the Baron's orders.

Late in the afternoon the Guard Company assembled again. First it reviewed the lesson of the morning. That lesson had been simple but the Baron exacted the strictest precision. Then in the same manner, two new movements, the "wheel" to the right and the "wheel" to the left were introduced. These were first executed by small squads under the brigade inspectors. Then the Baron formed the whole company in double rank and put it through the whole lesson of the day.

On Friday morning, the twentieth, the drill was resumed. Thursday's lesson was repeated several times and each time with greater precision. Then again an advance lesson was given, first to small detachments and then to the whole company. It would be unprofitable to bring back the details of that old drill from oblivion. But it is worth while to consider the Baron's objective. His first aim was to introduce a uniform step in the army and to teach it to march. His drill was based upon the Prussian drill he had learned in his youth but he eliminated every motion and every maneuver that was not absolutely essential.

So the drill was resumed on Saturday. It was on that day probably that he began to introduce his simplified manual of the musket. Here again he confined himself to essentials. He eliminated more than half of the elaborate Prussian manual of arms. He would teach the soldier how to carry his musket on the march, how to load it and fire it, how to fix the bayonet and how to charge with it in battle. The number of motions he reduced to the minimum, but in their execution he required the utmost precision. Each of these motions the Baron illustrated himself, taking a musket in his hands and acting as drill sergeant.

In the meantime, the spectacle had grown in interest. News of the Baron's performance had spread through the whole camp. His progress had been amazing. The new Guard Company could, as yet, do only a few things, but it did those things astonishingly well.

2

WASHINGTON was satisfied with the progress of the Guard Company, and prepared to extend the instructions to the entire command. On Sunday the twenty-second his order of the day contains the following paragraph:

> As a system of easy manoeuvres and exercises is to be introduced with a view of establishing uniformity on these points throughout the army, the Commanding officers of Brigades and Regiments are desired to discontinue exercising their Men by way of instruction, untill new regulations shall be distributed. Such Evolutions and exercises as are indispensibly necessary in the ordinary Camp Duties, may in the meantime be performed according to the accustomed method.

The foregoing order was necessary, but it produced some grumbling throughout the camp. Some of the higher officers read it with disgust. Here was a strange pass, by Gad! What was the service coming to when a general officer was forbidden to drill his own command? The brigadiers, with the exception of Anthony Wayne and a few others, had never been especially eager to exercise the privilege when they had it. But with the exception of Anthony Wayne and a few others, they all resented being deprived of it. Brigadier General Varnum was not alone in thinking that the service was going to the devil.

By this time the first chapter of the Baron's Instructions had been issued to all the companies in the army, and it was decided that the drill of the whole command should begin on Tuesday. On that day each brigade inspector would carry the Baron's gospel to the companies of his own brigade. On Monday, therefore, the Baron assembled them as his assistants with the model company for the last time. Thereafter, it would be their mission to transmit the model to the army as a whole. The model company was now at least six drills ahead of the general program. It would retain that lead in the future. As new exercises were prescribed, they would be demonstrated first by the guard company before being transmitted through the brigade inspectors to the rest of the command.

3

IT may readily be conceived that the Baron was seriously handicapped by his limited knowledge of English. But it so happened that this handicap became one of the greatest factors in his success. From the first, the soldiers were amused by his broken English and his rich exotic profanity in moments of stress. This reached a climax during one of the early drills. The Baron had given an order, and the movement had begun with the customary precision. He then gave another order which was not understood. Some of the men went one way and some another. He had memorized the English commands for the movements but his English was not enough for this emergency. He knew what he wanted to say, but he could say it only in French or German. He said it in French, but that merely increased the confusion. Then he said it in German which made things worse. His model company was in complete disorder. He got red in the face and sputtered. He attempted the sign language, but in vain. Then he blew up and began to swear in French and German with violent explosions of "Goddam,"* at that time his only English oath. His assistants could not help him. Duponceau could understand his French but could not grasp the tactical demands of the situation. The brigade inspectors were helpless. They could not understand him at all.

Just at this moment a young officer stepped out from among the crowd of spectators. He addressed the Baron in French and offered his services as an interpreter. Steuben said later that he welcomed him as an angel from heaven. In a few moments the situation was cleared, the company was reformed, the laughter checked. The Baron gave the instructions again through his new interpreter and the maneuver was executed without a fault.[1]

Here was a touch of comedy to make the whole play a success. The incident spread through the camp with the sound of Homeric laughter. He who knows the character of the American soldier will understand its effect. From that day Steuben became one of the most popular figures in the affections of the plain soldiers of the Continental Army.

The same catastrophe was to occur many times in the future. When a maneuver went wrong, the Baron would delight the soldiers by swearing in French and then in German. When his artillery of foreign oaths was exhausted he would call on one of his assistants to curse in English for him.

Tradition has preserved his language on one of these occasions as follows: "*Viens*, Walker, *mon ami, mon bon ami! sacré!* Goddam *de gaucheries of dese badauts. Je ne puis plus.* I can curse dem no more."[2]

The young officer who came so opportunely to the Baron's relief was Captain Benjamin Walker of the New York Regiment. A few weeks later he became his aide-de-camp. They were devoted friends to the end of the Baron's life. Years later, it was Walker who placed him in the grave where he now lies.

* This is the way the Baron always spelled it. As a gifted connoisseur in profanity, this was one of his first spoils in acquiring an English vocabulary.

4

EVEN in the midst of his labors at Valley Forge there were hours of relaxation. The Baron spent many evenings at Mistress Washington's. With the other foreign officers, he enjoyed the hospitality of Mrs. Greene, who spoke French and knew something of French literature. He was also a genial host in his own quarters. Says North:

> Never was his table unfurnished with guests, if furnished with provisions. Officers of the higher grades, men most prominent for their knowledge and attention to duty were principally his guests;—but the gentlemen of his family were desired to complete the list with others of inferior rank. "Poor fellows," said he, "they have field officers' stomachs, without their pay or rations."[3]

Duponceau gives us a glimpse of a rollicking party at the Baron's shortly after his arrival at Valley Forge, when the army was short of clothing and the officers and men were in rags:

> Once with the Baron's permission, his aids invited a number of young officers to dine at our quarters, on condition that none should be admitted that had on a whole pair of breeches. This was of course understood as *pars pro toto;* but torn clothes were an indispensable requisite for admission, and in this the guests were very sure not to fail. The dinner took place. The guests clubbed their rations, and we dined sumptuously on tough beefsteak and potatoes, with hickory nuts for our dessert. Instead of wine, we had some kind of spirits, with which we made "Salamanders," that is to say, after filling our glasses, we set the liquor on fire and drank it up, flame and all. Such a set of ragged, and, at the same time, merry fellows, were never brought together. The Baron loved to speak of that dinner, and of his "Sansculottes," as he called us. Thus this denomination was first invented in America and applied to the brave officers and soldiers of our revolutionary army.[4]

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WHOLE ARMY AT DRILL

1

ON Tuesday, March 24, the general drill program opened pursuant to Washington's order: "At Nine o'clock precisely all the brigades will begin their exercises, each regiment on its own parade, and the Inspector General will attend the exercise."

But the Baron assembled his corps of drillmasters earlier. At eight o'clock, the brigade inspectors with all of the majors and captains and a lieutenant from each company reported to him on the Grand Parade. There he checked their copies of his new regulations and gave them his final orders. Then he sent them to their regimental parades in time for the nine o'clock assembly.

So by ten minutes after nine o'clock, Valley Forge presented a busy scene. All of the army was at drill. Each regiment was divided into squads of twenty men. Each brigade inspector was supervising the exercises within his brigade. The Baron galloped from parade ground to parade ground, taking a hand here and there, impressing his personality everywhere. Thanks to the example already given by the Guard Company, all of the drillmasters and most of the soldiers knew exactly what to do because they had seen it done.

That night John Laurens wrote to his father:

> The Baron Steuben has commenced the functions of inspector general. . . . The Baron discovers the greatest zeal, and an activity which is hardly to be expected of his years. The officers in general seem to entertain a high opinion of him, and he sets them an excellent example in descending to the functions of a drill-sergeant.[1] . . .

2

STEUBEN's drill program was now under way with such auguries of success that Washington was at last ready to fix his authority in the army. He therefore published the following in his general order of March 28:

> The Baron Steuben, a lieutenant general in foreign service, and a gentleman of great military experience having obligingly undertaken the exercise of inspector general in the army, the Commander in Chief, till the pleasure of Congress shall be known, desires he may be respected as such; and hopes that all officers of whatever rank in it, will afford him every aid in their power in the execution of his office. Lieutenant Colonels Davies, Brooks and Barber, and Mr. Ternant are appointed to act as sub-inspectors; the three former retaining their rank and order in the line.
>
> The Importance of establishing an uniform system of useful maneuvers, and regularity of discipline, must be obvious; the deficiency of our army in those respects must be equally so; but the time we probably shall have to introduce the necessary reformation is short. With the most active exertion, therefore, of officers of every class, it may be possible to effect all the improvement that may be essential to the success of the ensuing campaign. Arguments surely need not be multiplied to kindle the zeal of officers in a matter of such great moment to their own homes, the advancement of the service, and the prosperity of our arms.

On the same day, the second chapter of the Drill Regulations was published. It introduced the manual of the musket and announced that each day the troops were to be "exercised in charging the enemy by platoons," firing and advancing and afterwards to rush the enemy with fixed bayonets.

The use of the bayonet was particularly stressed by the Baron. As soon as the men were sufficiently drilled in the manual of arms they were practiced in bayonet fighting every day. In the past campaigns the Colonial soldiers had been more than a match for the enemy in a fire fight but they had never been trained to stand the brunt of close fighting with naked steel.

Bayonets had been issued to them but, uninstructed in their proper use, they found them useful only as spits for broiling their beefsteaks. They were not worth carrying for this purpose alone, and so they were thrown away with other useless impedimenta. Under the Baron's instructions the Continentals became fierce bayonet fighters. This was soon to be demonstrated a few weeks later at the battle of Monmouth. The following year the light infantry under Anthony Wayne took Stony Point at the point of the bayonet without firing a shot. Wayne is entitled to full credit for this great exploit but the weapon that he wielded was forged and tempered by Steuben.

3

By the end of March there had been good progress in the marchings and wheelings and a fair start in the simplified manual of arms. So far, the troops had been exercised only in platoons and companies. But here there was no training for the senior officers. It was therefore the Baron's plan to have battalion drill every day.

But he encountered a serious practical difficulty. Under the system of one-year enlistments adopted by Congress in 1775, all of the regiments were at greatly reduced strength. Most of last year's men had been discharged. Only a few had reënlisted for another year or for the longer term recently, but too tardily, authorized by Congress. It was uncertain when the recruits for the current year would join the army and their number could not be predicted. This had been the situation every year since the siege of Boston, and each year the situation had grown worse. There had never been any regiments strong enough, during the winter and early spring, to muster an effective training battalion, and so it had been necessary to enter each year's campaign with untrained battalions under untrained battalion commanders. This had prolonged the war unnecessarily.*

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* When the Continental Army was formed in 1775, Washington urged that the soldiers be enlisted for the duration of the war. This was rejected by Congress and a one-year enlistment was adopted. Had Washington's advice been

In one of Steuben's official reports, he says that he found one company at Valley Forge reduced to a single enlisted man, a corporal. One regiment contained only thirty private soldiers. All of the regiments were mere skeletons. How could there be any battalion drill in such an army?

The Baron found a practical solution for this difficulty. Before each drill, all of the private soldiers in each brigade were formed in a single line. The brigade inspector then counted them and formed them into one or more provisional battalions according to the number actually present. If a brigade contained only 112 private soldiers it was formed into a single drill battalion. If it contained more than 224 privates, two provisional battalions were formed—and so on, according to the actual number of private soldiers present for drill. The temporary battalions so formed were then subdivided into companies and platoons and the proper number of officers and noncommissioned officers were assigned to them. This, of course, left many officers and noncommissioned officers in each brigade unassigned. For the moment, these surplus leaders acted as observers. Later in the course of the drill, they took their turns as unit commanders or guides, according to their rank.

In this manner effective drill battalions were formed each day and each of the Baron's exercises was practiced by battalion as well as by company and platoon. This not only facilitated his drill at Valley Forge but established a means of compensating for some of the evil effects of the prevalent recruiting system. Thereafter, however depleted in numbers it might be, Washington's army could always muster effective battalions for battle. And thereafter, each brigade could maintain its sys-

accepted then, while men were still eager to enlist, there was enough population and wealth in the country to maintain an army of 40,000 men—with all regiments continuously at full strength and growing progressively better trained each year. With such an army the war should have ended in decisive American victory before the winter of Valley Forge. Washington's opinion as stated officially to Congress in August, 1780 fully corroborates this view. All of our subsequent military experience confirms the soundness of his judgment. For the political influences that led to the rejection of a sound military policy, see pages 218–220 below.

tem of tactical training throughout the winter interval between campaigns. This important feature of Steuben's service at Valley Forge has been overlooked. He not only prepared the army for the impending campaign, but organized it as a permanent training cadre for the rapid assimilation of each year's recruits.

4

ON April 1, John Laurens wrote to his father:

> . . . I must not omit to inform you that Baron Steuben is making a sensible progress with our soldiers. The officers seem to have a high opinion of him and discover a docility from which we may augur the most happy effects.
>
> It would enchant you to see the enlivened scene on our Campus Martius. If Mr. Howe opens his campaign with his usual deliberation, and our recruits or draughts come in tolerably well, we shall be infinitely better prepared to meet him than ever we have been.[2]

On April 7, President Laurens wrote to an absent member of Congress, James Duane:

> Baron Stüben has condescended to act as Drill Master as well as Inspector in Camp. He has hit the taste of the Officers, gives universal Satisfaction and I am assured has made an amazing improvement in discipline. A young correspondent of mine, who is a very honest man and not very ignorant and who has always regretted the deficiency of discipline, tells me if I were present I should be enchanted by the change suddenly made in the Grand Camp.[3]

But the most lifelike picture of the Baron's progress at this time is given in a letter from Colonel Alexander Scammell to General Sullivan. On April 8, Scammell wrote:

> Baron Steuben sets us a truly noble example. He has undertaken the discipline of the army, and shows himself to be a perfect master of it, not only in the grand maneuvers, but in the most minute details. To see a gentleman, dignified with a lieutenant general's commission from the great Prussian monarch, condescend, with a

> grace peculiar to himself, to take under his direction a squad of ten or twelve men in the capacity of a drill-sergeant, commands the admiration of both officers and men, and causes them to improve exceedingly fast under his instructions.[4]

Scammell's letter stresses the strongest factor in the Baron's success. He was able and industrious. He had the necessary knowledge and great personal charm and magnetism. But it was the halo of Frederick the Great that gave him his commanding influence. Franklin had wisely foreseen the value of this asset, and Scammell's letter shows that Washington was still profiting by it though he had known for some time that Steuben had never been a Prussian lieutenant general.

Shortly after his arrival at Valley Forge, the Baron had explained to his young friend, John Laurens, that a mistake had been made in crediting him with that eminent rank in the Prussian Army. Accordingly on March 9, young Laurens had written his father:

> I must tell you tho' by the bye, that Congress has mistaken his rank in Prussia. He was there *lieutenant general quartier maitre*, which in good English is deputy quartermaster general. He had never any higher rank in the Prussian service than that of colonel. But he was lieutenant general of the Margrave de Baden's troops, after he had retired from the Prussian army in disgust.[5]

In making his explanation to young Laurens, the Baron had toned down Franklin's original falsehood and had replaced it by another not quite so grossly palpable. When John Laurens transmitted the revised version to his father, we may be sure that, as aide-de-camp, he also gave it to his chief—unless, indeed, the Baron had done so himself. So, as we have seen, when Washington published his order announcing Steuben's appointment as acting inspector general, he referred to him merely as a lieutenant general *in foreign service*. But while Washington did nothing to propagate the myth of the Baron's close association with Frederick the Great, he evidently did nothing to suppress its general circulation. This is quite apparent from

Scammell's letter. To Scammell, the Baron was still the right-hand man of Frederick the Great. And when Scammell wrote that letter he was Washington's adjutant general and most intimate personal friend among his staff officers.

By the middle of April, the drills were well under way. The troops were learning to march in column and to deploy from column into line. They were acquiring precision in the manual of arms and snap and vim with their bayonets. But above all they were learning to march in compact masses with steadiness and without losing distance.

This most important lesson the Continental Army had never learned. From their experience in Indian warfare, the Colonials had generally marched in Indian fashion (column of files). This had resulted in greatly elongated columns on the march. A brigade marching Indian fashion takes up four times as much road space as it would in column of fours, and even more, because it is impossible to enforce march discipline and prevent straggling in the long column of files. And then, of course, the elongated column requires more time to form line to the front and meet the enemy. Where a command marching correctly in column of fours can form to the front in thirty minutes, it will take over two hours for the same command to make the same maneuver from "Indian" files. This is the real reason why some organizations had reached the battlefield too late at such battles as Brandywine and Germantown. Even though the head of the column arrived in time, its tail arrived too late. And until the tail arrived there could be no effective preparation for action. It was this defect in the discipline of the army that Steuben first sought to correct. He therefore taught each battalion to occupy no more space on the road than it was to occupy in line of battle. Until this lesson was learned efficient maneuver on the parade ground or the battlefield was impossible.

The lesson seems to have been learned by April 10. On that day Washington's orders prohibited any further marching by files, and prescribed that, thereafter, all detachments of six men or more should march in double rank at closed distance. Thereafter, not only companies at drill, but small guard and fatigue details, at all hours of the day or night, were required to march exactly as Steuben had taught them on the drill ground. In the meantime, battalions were formed each day. They marched without loss of distance. They passed from column to line and from line into column. They closed in mass, forming what the Baron called "sollid collums." At each drill they practised aiming and firing and charged the enemy with the bayonet. Indeed, as the Baron wrote later:

> My Enterprize Succeeded better than I had dared to expect, and I had the Satisfaction, in a month's time, to see not only a regular Step introduced in the Army, but I also made maneuvers with ten and twelve Battalions with as much precision as the Evolution of a Single Company.[6]

Steuben gives another retrospective account of his success in a letter to his friend, Baron von der Goltz, the Prussian ambassador in Paris:

> Believe me, dear Baron, that the task I had to perform was not an easy one. My good republicans wanted everything in the English style; our great and good allies everything according to the French *mode;* and when I presented a plate of *sauerkraut* dressed in the Prussian style, they all wanted to throw it out of the window. Nevertheless, by the force of proving by *Goddams* that my cookery was the best, I overcame the prejudices of the former; but the second liked me as little in the forests of America as they did on the plains of Rossbach. Do not, therefore, be astonished if I am not painted in very bright colors in Parisian circles.[7]

He also wrote to his old comrade in arms, Baron von Gaudy:

> In the first place, the genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians or French. You say to your soldier, "Do this, and he doeth it"; but I am obliged to say, "This is the reason why you ought to do that: and then he does it."[8]

On April 18, the Baron again appears in one of John Laurens' letters to his father:

> . . . He is Exerting himself like a lieutenant anxious for promotion, and the good effects of his labour are visible.
>
> The General, I apprehend, is restrained from writing to Congress on this head [Steuben's promotion] till he shall be acquainted with the sentiments of the brigadiers respecting the Baron's rank. But, (this between ourselves), as far as I can learn in conversation with those gentlemen, every one is convinced of his zeal and abilities, and thinks him deserving of the grade which he asks for.[9] . . .

No doubt, as his aide-de-camp suggested, Washington was waiting to ascertain the sentiments of his brigadiers. But he was also waiting for something more. He was hoping that a particular vacancy would occur in the grade of major general. And his expectation was soon realized.

On April 22, General Conway wrote a petulant letter to General Gates. He complained that he had been sent on a fruitless errand to Albany, thence back to Peekskill and from there back to Albany again. At the end of his letter he said:

> I Do not pretend to be superior to Baron Steuben as to Genius or merit but having been peculiarly employ'd in training troops to all field maneuvers, having much more practice than he has, speaking the Language, I can venture to say that I would have effected in one month or six weeks, what he will not be able to accomplish in six months. However if the army is train'd up properly it is not material who trains it up, and I am pretty well satisfy'd as to that point, but the Campaign is opening; I am readdy to take the field if my services are Deem'd Necessary. If they are not, I must represent to you that my honour, my principles, the regard I must pay to my rank in the french army will not permit me to remain idle in a town, while troops are in the field.
>
> Therefore, Sir, if you have no occasion for my services I expect Congress will be so equitable as to accept of my resignation.[10] . . .

This letter was read in Congress on April 28. Conway's reference to his resignation was intended only as a bluff, but Congress immediately called it. That same day President Laurens wrote to Washington that Conway's resignation had been accepted. There was now a vacancy in the office of inspector general.

5

WASHINGTON received news of Conway's resignation on April 30. That same day he wrote to Congress:

> The extensive ill consequences arising from a want of uniformity in discipline and maneuvers throughout the army, have long occasioned me to wish for the establishment of a well-organized inspectorship, and the concurrence of Congress in the same views has induced me to set on foot a temporary institution, which, from the success that has hitherto attended it, gives me the most flattering expectations, and will, I hope obtain their approbation.
>
> Baron de Steuben's length of service in the first military school in Europe, and his former rank, pointed him out as a person peculiarly qualified to be at the head of this department. This appeared to be the least exceptionable way of introducing him to the army, and one that would give him the most ready opportunity of displaying his talents. I therefore proposed to him to undertake the office of Inspector General, which he agreed to with the greatest chearfulness, and has performed the Duties of it with a Zeal and Intelligence equal to our wishes. He has two ranks of Inspectors under him; the lowest are officers charged with the inspection of Brigades, with the title of brigade inspectors, the others superintend several of these. They have written instructions relative to their several functions, and the maneuvers they are to practice are illustrated by a company which the baron has taken the pains to train himself. . . .
>
> I should do injustice, if I were to be longer silent with regard to the merits of Baron de Steuben. His knowledge of his profession, added to the zeal which he has displayed since he began upon the functions of his office, leads me to consider him as an acquisition to the service, and to recommend him to the attention of Congress. His expectations with respect to rank extend to that of Major General. His finances, he ingenuously confesses, will not admit his serving without the incidental emoluments, and Congress, I pre-

sume, from his Character and their own Knowledge of him, will, without difficulty, gratify him in these particulars.

The baron is sensible that our situation requires a few variations, in the duties of his office, from the general practice in Europe, and particularly that they must be more comprehensive, in which, as well as in his instructions, he has skillfully yielded to circumstances.

The success which has hitherto attended the plan, enables me to request, with confidence, the ratification of Congress, and is, I think, a pledge of the establishment of a well-combined general system, which insurmountable obstacles have hitherto opposed.

6

A LETTER from an officer at Valley Forge, published in a contemporary newspaper, gives the following account of the state of the army at this time:

> The Army grows stronger every day. It increases in numbers . . . and there is a spirit of discipline among the troops that is better than numbers. Each brigade is on parade almost every day for several hours. You would be charmed to see the regularity and exactness with which they march and perform their maneuvers.
>
> The troops were so harrassed with marches* last year that there was little discipline among them: it was almost impossible to advance or retire in the presence of an enemy without disordering the line and falling into confusion. That misfortune, I believe, will seldom happen again, . . . for the troops are instructed in a new and so happy a method of marching that they soon will be able to advance with the utmost regularity, even without musick and on the roughest grounds.[11]

It was now six weeks since the model company had been formed and five weeks since the training of the army as a whole had begun. The progress attained seemed almost miraculous to Washington and his officers and men. But when we recall what sound system and skilled leadership can accomplish in four weeks in our citizens' military training camps, Steuben's success is not surprising. Nor will we be surprised to learn that as the soldiers grew in skill they grew in soldierly pride and that a new morale* nevermore to be extinguished soon pervaded the ranks of the Continental Army. As new recruits began to come in there was now an organized staff ready to receive them. The army rapidly grew in numbers and in discipline at the same time. This new birth of the Continental Army as a trained fighting machine is Steuben's contribution to the history of the War for Independence.

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* That is, marches during active operations without preliminary training in the art of marching.

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* By this time, also, there were better supplies of food and clothing. The intrigues against Washington had collapsed and he now had the full support of the government. General Greene had replaced the incompetent Mifflin as quartermaster general, and Jeremiah Wadsworth had brought new life to the subsistence department.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GRAND REVIEW

1

IF Washington exulted in the progress of his army on the last day of April, a new omen of success came to him the following day. On May Day, he received advance news that a treaty of alliance had been made with France. He immediately wrote to President Laurens that, upon official confirmation of the news and subject to the approval of Congress, he proposed to celebrate the auspicious event with a military review and ceremony at Valley Forge. The same day he conferred with Steuben and directed him to make the necessary arrangements for appropriate military exercises.

The next day the orderly books bore the following entry:

> The Brigade Inspectors will send today to the Inspectors of Divisions, the number of files which can be under arms in order to make the *Feu de Joye* and these will give me tomorrow a return of them at the Parade.
>
> Steuben.

That the Baron contemplated having the army give a *Feu de Joye* is a high tribute to the drill proficiency that the troops had attained. In this exercise the army would be formed in two lines, each in double rank, all muskets loaded with blank cartridges. At the appropriate signal, a cannon shot, musketry fire would begin on the right of the front line, then run progressively down to the left of the first line and back along the second line from left to right. Properly executed by a large body of troops this "running fire" makes a most impressive spectacle but obviously it can succeed only in a command whose soldiers are all proficient in the manual of arms and well disciplined.

2

In the preparations for the military ceremonies, Steuben acted as Washington's chief of staff. Official confirmation of the French alliance was received from Congress on May 5. That evening instructions for a Grand Review, to be executed the following day, were published in general orders. The military details of the order were prepared by the Baron, but we may be sure that the following opening paragraph was composed by the commander in chief himself:

> It having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the Universe propitiously to defend the Cause of the United American States & finally, by raising us up a powerful Friend among the Princes of the Earth, to establish our Liberty & Independence upon lasting Foundations, it becomes us to set apart a day for gratefully acknowledging the divine Goodness & celebrating the important Event which we owe to his benign Interposition.
>
> The several Brigades are to be assembled for this purpose at 9 o'clock to Morrow Morning when their chaplains will communicate the Intelligence . . . and offer up a Thanksgiving. . . .

Then follow the directions for the military exercises. After the religious ceremony, the brigades are to be formed into battalions of equal strength: then, after a second signal by cannon shot, they are to march to their places in the line of battle as indicated by the Baron de Steuben's aides. The right wing of the first line is to be commanded by Major General Lord Stirling and the left wing by the Marquis de Lafayette. The Baron de Kalb is to command the second line. The order concludes with another phrase, composed no doubt by the thoughtful commander in chief himself: "Each man is to have a jill of Rum."

3

We are enabled to see the Grand Review through the eyes of an actual spectator. On May 7 John Laurens wrote to his father:

> Yesterday we celebrated the new alliance with as much splendour as the short notice would allow. Divine service preceded the rejoicing. After a proper pause, the several brigades marched by their right to their posts in order of battle, and the line was formed with admirable rapidity and precision. Three salutes of artillery, thirteen [guns] each, and three general discharges of a running fire by the musquetry were given in honour of the King of France, the friendly European powers, and the United American States.
>
> The order with which the whole was conducted, the beautiful effect of the running fire which was executed to perfection, the martial appearance of the troops, gave sensible pleasure to every one present. The whole was managed by signal and the plan, as formed by Baron de Steuben, succeeded in every particular which is in a great measure attributed to his unwearied attention, and to the visible progress which the troops have already made under his discipline.
>
> A cold collation was given afterwards, at which all the officers and some ladies of the neighborhood were present. Triumph beamed on every countenance. The greatness of mind and policy of Louis XVI were extol^{d}, and his long life toasted with as much sincerity as that of the British king used to be in former times. The General received such proofs of the love and attachment of his officers as must have given him the most exquisite feelings. . . . If ever there was a man in the world whose moderation and patriotism fitted him for the command of a Republican army, he is, and he merits unrestrained confidence.[1] . . .

In a newspaper account of the exercises we also have the following significant incident:

> During the review an officer was called to one side, in order to know what was to be done with a spy who was making observations on the army. But the officer coolly observed to the gentleman who gave the information, that he thought it best to take no further notice of the spy, but suffer him to return to his employers, as they must feel more pain from his account of the army, than grief on hearing of his detection and death.[2]

Washington's satisfaction with the review is expressed formally in the following extract from the general order of May 7:

> The Commander in Chief takes particular pleasure in acquainting the army that their conduct yesterday afforded him the highest satisfaction. The exactness and order with which their movements were performed is a pleasing evidence of the progress they are making in Military Improvement & an earnest of the pleasing perfection to which they will shortly arrive with a continuation of that laudable Zeal & Emulation which so happily prevails.
>
> The General at the same time presents his thanks to Baron Steuben & the gentlemen under him for their Indefatigable Exertions in the duties of their office, the good effects of which are already so apparent, and for the care, activity and propriety manifested in conducting the business of yesterday.

4

While Steuben was engaged in his preparations for the Grand Review, his own fortunes were approaching a happy issue in Congress. Washington's letter recommending him for the inspectorship was received by President Laurens on May 2. But the French treaty was also received on that day and, for the moment, displaced all other business. The delay was a short one, however. Steuben's many friends in Congress were fully acquainted with his brilliant success at Valley Forge and were only awaiting the formal recommendation of the commander in chief. On May 5, therefore, it was resolved:

> That Congress approve of General Washington's plan for the institution of a well-organized inspectorship.
>
> That Baron Steuben be appointed to the office of inspector general, with the rank and pay of Major General, his pay to commence from the time he joined the army and entered into service of the United States. . . .

In transmitting a copy of these resolutions, President Laurens wrote to the Baron:

> . . . Congress have resolved to appoint you and you are hereby appointed Inspector General of the Main Army with the Rank & Pay of Major General, the former to commence from the day of your arrival here. . . .

> I most heartily congratulate you, Sir, & as heartily wish it was an appointment more adequate to your high merits & more worthy of your acceptance.[3]

Steuben was very popular in Congress at this time. A few weeks later, on the motion of President Laurens, a resolution was passed directing the quartermaster general to purchase two fine saddle horses for the inspector general.

5

THE news of Steuben's appointment reached General Washington by courier just after the Grand Review. But he did not communicate it at once. He waited until the officers and the ladies were assembled for the reception. Then, just before the "cold collation" and the toasts of the evening, he presented the Baron to his guests, not as "a lieutenant general in foreign service," but as Major General Baron de Steuben, Inspector General of the Army of the United States.

We may now forget the more exalted rank of lieutenant general, whether it emanated from Prussia, or Baden or the Circle of Suabia. It had served the purpose for which it was conceived by Benjamin Franklin and his colleagues. As the Baron wrote to Hamilton many years later:

> If, however, I should be charged with having made use of illicit stratagems to gain admission into the service of the United States, I am sure I have obtained my pardon of the Army, and I flatter myself, of the citizens of this Republic in general.[4]

CHAPTER XXV

A NEW-FANGLED POWER

1

DURING the month of May, the training of the army made rapid progress. There were reviews and other ceremonies on the parade ground. There was instruction in sentry duty, and the daily guard mounting became a brilliant ceremony. The troops were practised in skirmishing as well as in close order. There were also tactical exercises on rough ground. Here the Baron conducted field maneuvers such as were then scarcely known except in Prussia. In these exercises, under simulated war conditions, the troops made tactical marches and attacked and defended positions.

Up to this time Washington had permitted Steuben to exercise the troops at his own discretion. But more and more this aroused antagonism among the general officers. Their soldiers were taken from them and were commanded, not by themselves, but by the Baron and his subinspectors. Steuben's staff officers also called for "returns" of strength and checked up the absentees from drill. This revealed that too many men were acting as officers' servants. The generals did not like this. As early as April 2, the Baron wrote to President Laurens:

> . . . The good will I find in your Soldiers and the greatest Part of your officers, encourages me Exceedingly, and if on another Side I find fetters and obstacles, I go on nevertheless, leaving to your Army the care of rendering me Justice.[1]

On May 5, Brigadier General Varnum made a formal complaint against Steuben, in a letter to Washington:

> I have observed some time since, the progressive Encroachment of a new-fangled power, which if not checked may prove destructive to this Army. I mean the office of Inspector. It was created with the View of forming the Troops upon one system of Discipline and

> Tacticks. The event has fully justified the establishment. But when that Office begins to divest others of every Power and leave them in Possession of Names only, it becomes highly necessary to stand upon our Guard. I shall not, at this time, mention the particular Instances which have justly alarmed every feeling Officer, as I am fond of thinking that Baron Stupend's Intentions are founded in Honor & Integrity. But being too much prejudiced against the American Officers from an Ignorance of their Abilities, he may have extended his authority further than he otherwise would. I shall content myself with disclosing a Circumstance which happened yesterday and which, I must confess filled me with Horror. *The Brigade Inspectors, by the Baron's Order, called upon the different Adjutants of the Army for Returns of the Men fit for Duty!** Two Circumstances induce me to abhor this Measure as totally repugnant to every Military Idea. In the first place, a number of non important Officers are made acquainted with the Strength of your Army. A Number of the Returns, I saw myself, in the Hands of the Baron's Aids & there is not an Inspector or Gentleman in his Family but may know them. Consequently the Enemy may gain the greatest advantage. . . . In the Second Place, if Adjutants are to act independently of their Colonel's Orders, they are not accountable to them. . . .
>
> If the Baron by his Aids and Inspectors can manage my Brigade without my Orders, his Power is directly in Opposition to Your Excellency's, and there are two Commanders in Chief at the same time. . . .

The records do not show how Washington dealt with Varnum's complaint. He realized fully that the broad powers he had given Steuben could be only temporary. Sooner or later the generals must maneuver their own troops. But the time was not yet. The new system was only partially introduced. If Washington was to have an efficient army, Steuben must teach the brigades and divisions as well as the platoons and companies. For the present, he must support his inspector general but he must avoid offending his brigadiers. Here was one of those problems in dealing with cantankerous human nature that all leaders of men must solve. Apparently Washington found some means of soothing Varnum, for the Baron remained in full charge of training for several weeks longer.

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* The italics are mine.

2

ON May 8 Steuben attended his first council of war as an American officer. Washington outlined the situation of the British and American forces and asked his generals to advise him as to the wisdom of an attack on the enemy in Philadelphia or New York. It was the opinion of the council, in which the Baron concurred, that a defensive attitude should be maintained for the present. It was suggested, however, that preparations should be made for a vigorous offensive at the first favorable opportunity. That offensive action could be considered even as a future contingency was largely due to Steuben's influence in improving the maneuver power and morale of the troops. It was obvious that the little army at Valley Forge had attained a new tactical efficiency.

On May 19 this new efficiency was put to the test. Lafayette had been sent with about 2,200 Continentals and 600 militia to Barren Hill, a detached post across the Schuylkill. His isolated position with the river behind him became known to the British in Philadelphia. General Clinton, who had just relieved Lord Howe in command, determined to surround the marquis and cut him off. The British advanced secretly in three strong columns. Lafayette's militia outposts failed to warn him and he was almost surrounded before he appreciated his danger. There must be instant retreat. But would this be possible? The English officers did not think so. They remembered the bad marching of the Continentals in former campaigns. There would be the usual confusion and delay. It would be impossible for Lafayette's long straggling column to get back to the ford and across the river in time. Lord Howe was so sure the marquis would be captured that he invited his Philadelphia friends to dinner and announced that "the Boy" would be his guest of honor. But "the Boy" was not captured. He gave prompt orders for retreat and he now had soldiers who could execute them.[2] These new Continentals could march. There was no confusion and no straggling. They marched as they had learned to march in the Baron's maneuvers. According to a contemporary historian: "The orderly manner in which the Americans retreated on this occasion, and which contributed much to their escaping, is to be ascribed to the improvement made in their discipline owing greatly to the Baron De Steuben."[3]

3

THE day after Barren Hill, Major General Charles Lee returned to the American headquarters. Washington had recently secured his exchange as a prisoner of war. Here the Father of Our Country made a costly blunder. If he had left Lee in the hands of the enemy, he should have won a decisive victory in 1778 and shortened the war by three years. But this was not to be. Lee returned to the Continental Army where his prestige was high. He had been an officer in the British regulars. He had campaigned as a soldier of fortune in Turkey and Poland. He had been a major general in the Russian service. The American citizen officers considered him a very great soldier. Even Washington, as yet, was taken in by his genius for bluff.

Lee was unable to see any merit in Steuben's reforms. In fact, he let it out to his admirers that the army had "gone to the dogs" in his absence. Washington had welcomed his return with the highest official and personal honors. But immediately after this flattering reception, Lee told Elias Boudinot that he "found the army in a worse condition than he expected, and that General Washington was not fit to command a Sergeant's Guard."[4] And Lee had good cause to sneer at the Baron's reforms. They were objectionable to him because they rested upon genuine professional merit. If this Prussian upstart should introduce sound tactical standards into the army, where would Lee stand as a division commander? Even his subalterns would soon discover that beneath his effrontery he was a mere pretender.

There was another reason for Lee's antagonism. In spite of his sneers, he could not disguise the fact that the Continental Army was rapidly becoming a trained military force. Should this continue his standing as a military expert would be seriously discredited. While he was a prisoner of war he had prepared a plan of campaign for his old British comrades. In this plan he had given his professional opinion as to the best means of crushing the Colonial resistance.[5] His confidence in the success of this treasonable project was based upon the fact that the American army was ill trained and ill led. This was more or less true when he became a prisoner of war. But now his major premise was being rapidly upset by this German adventurer. If these reforms should go on, the conquest of the Americans would not be the easy task he had promised. Lee therefore began to throw obstacles in Steuben's way.[6] He soon discovered the latent jealousy and discontent of such brigadiers as Varnum, and organized and crystallized their opposition. He was unable to depreciate Steuben's ability. Even the disgruntled brigadiers conceded the success of the training program. But Lee found it sufficient to stress the Baron's ambition and his disposition to grasp authority. With his training task once done, he would probably seek the command of troops.

4

In the meantime, the legal status of the inspector general's department remained unsettled. So far, the Baron's influence extended only to the main army at Valley Forge. His authority must be defined by Congress before it could extend to the other armies. And even at Valley Forge, he had been acting as chief drillmaster rather than as inspector general. Before he could establish a permanent and uniform inspection service throughout the whole theater of war, the powers and limitations of his office must be settled by law.

During the month of May, the Baron sought to settle this business through correspondence with his young friend, Richard Peters, a member of the Board of War. Peters appreciated the importance of the inspection service and desired to give it the sanction of law. After duly digesting Steuben's recommendations, he drafted a plan for the inspector general's department in the form of a resolution to be adopted by Congress. It fixed the authority and duties of the inspector general and his assistants in general terms. It authorized him to make regulations for the conduct of the inspection service subject to the approval of higher authority. A copy of this document was duly sent to Washington for his approval.[7]

The proposed resolution encountered serious opposition at Valley Forge. Its very merits made it objectionable to Lee and the generals under his influence. It would establish the authority of the inspector general on solid grounds and that, in their eyes, was enough to damn it. Unfortunately, some of Steuben's proposals were really objectionable and gave his enemies a sound basis for criticism; among these was the following:

> . . . And all officers and soldiers in the armies of the United States are directed to pay due obedience to the orders of the inspector general and assistant inspector generals, on matters of military discipline and police, signified personally or through the several inspectors and brigade inspectors, under pain of being subject to a trial by court martial, and punished according to the nature of the offense, as a court martial shall think proper.

This would give the inspector general an authority that should be exercised only by the commander in chief. Even Hamilton and other devoted friends were bound to admit that this and similar provisions would give the Baron too much power.

5

WHILE the legal organization of the inspector service was thus under discussion, Lee and his friends pressed their resistance to Steuben's training operations. On June 14, John Laurens wrote to his father: "The Baron de Steuben desires to be remembered to you. Some jealousies against him have occasioned him great trouble and interrupted his progress in military instruction."[8]

It now became necessary for Washington to settle the controversy. He must decide the issue between his inspector general and the commanders of his troops. So far, the Baron had exercised an almost independent authority. Under the temporary powers Washington had delegated to him, he virtually commanded the army in all matters of training. This had enabled him to expedite the training of the troops, but it was breaking down the normal hierarchy of command. If the generals were to command the brigades and divisions in battle, they must be responsible for their training. There was indeed an element of truth in Varnum's complaint that there were "two commanders in chief at the same time." Evidently the Baron must be reduced to the status of a staff officer.

Washington cleared up this tangle with his usual good sense and dispatch. On June 15, he published a general order to govern the inspector general's office, pending final action by Congress. Under this order the inspector general was still charged with the duty of preparing regulations for the conduct of the troops in camp and in the field. But hereafter these regulations, after approval by the commander in chief, would be issued by the adjutant general through the usual military channels. The commanders of divisions and brigades were charged with carrying these regulations into effect, and the inspector general would still inspect and maneuver portions of the command from time to time, but only when so directed in orders.

Washington's order was an effective solution. It met the wishes of the disgruntled generals in depriving Steuben of his direct control of the troops. But it really placed his military gospel on a stronger foundation. This gospel would now be the official gospel of the commander in chief. Hereafter, each division and brigade commander must demonstrate his capacity to make it effective within his proper command. The commander in chief was now provided with visible standards of military efficiency to which each subordinate commander must conform. Fortunately, the generals were given effective aid in the execution of their tactical duties. The order prescribed that the subinspectors, so carefully trained by the Baron, should now become the tactical assistants of their brigade and division commanders. Many a half-baked general has been coached into very creditable efficiency by an able and tactful staff officer.

6

STEUBEN strongly resented the hostile attitude of Lee and his confederates. As a subordinate soldier, he accepted the restricted status accorded him in the new general order. But there was a bit of irony in his letter to Washington on the seventeenth:

> . . . It gives me great Satisfaction to see that your Excellency has taken such a wise step in my Department as to engage the General Officers and Field Officers of Regiments to take command of the troops in our daily Exercise. . . . I had wished, some time ago, it might soon be the Case: but in the meanwhile, *I was endeavoring, with the Gentlemen under me, to make the Officers and Soldiers a little more perfect, in order to enable the Gen Officers to pass immediately to Grand Maneuvers, and save them the trouble of descending to those Toilsome and fastidious details which we chearfully encountered from the beginning for the good of the service.** . . . As it will take a few Days for the General Officers & c to become acquainted and familiar with the instructions and Principles heretofore approved of and established by your Excellency . . . I will seize this opportunity, with your Excellency's leave, to take a short Journey to York, there to settle some affairs with my friend, Mr. DeFrancy,† and to take leave of him before he goes to South Carolina. . . .

Steuben's letter raised a delicate issue at headquarters. Hamilton and John Laurens were devoted friends of the Baron's, but they were also loyal and intelligent staff officers. They knew that a good-bye chat with DeFrancy was not the only motive for the proposed journey to York. They knew that the inspector general proposed to do a bit of lobbying for his department and that he was still unduly tenacious of his authority. It was therefore important that Congress should be apprized of Washington's view of the recent controversy. As he did not wish to write at length on this subject to the president of Congress, he adopted the expedient, well known to all resourceful generals, of having an aide-de-camp write an inspired letter. Hamilton therefore wrote to William Duer, a congressman from New York:

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* The italics are mine. Ben Walker must have enjoyed translating that passage into English and, no doubt, Washington chuckled when he read it.

† Beaumarchais' nephew and agent.

> I take the liberty to trouble you with a few hints on a matter of some importance. Baron Steuben, who will be the bearer of this, waits on Congress to have his office arranged upon some decisive and permanent footing. It will not be amiss to be on your guard. The baron is a gentleman for whom I have a particular esteem, and whose zeal, intelligence, and success, the consequence of both, entitle him to the greatest credit. But I am apprehensive, with all his good qualities, a fondness for power and importance, natural to every man, may lead him to wish for more extensive prerogatives in his department than it will be for the good of the service to grant. . . .
>
> On the first institution of this office, the general allowed him to exercise more ample powers than would be proper for a continuance. They were necessary in the commencement, to put things in a train with a degree of dispatch which the exigency of our affairs required: but it has been necessary to restrain them, even earlier than was intended. The novelty of the office excited questions about its boundaries: the extent of its operations alarmed the officers of every rank for their own rights. Their jealousies and discontents were rising to a height that threatened to overturn the whole plan. It became necessary to apply a remedy. The general has delineated the functions of the inspectorship in general orders, a copy of which will be sent to Congress. The plan is good and satisfactory to the army in general. . . .
>
> There is one thing which the baron has much at heart, which, in good policy, he can by no means be indulged in: it is the power of enforcing that part of discipline which we understand by subordination, or an obedience to orders. This power can only be properly

lodged in the commander-in-chief and would inflame the whole army if put in other hands.[9] . . .

Having assured himself that Congress would be fully enlightened through Duer, Washington now wrote to President Laurens:

> The Baron Steuben will have the Honor of delivering you this. I do not know particularly the extent of his business at York but from what he has communicated it is in part to get the duties and powers of his office minutely defined and settled. I inclose a copy of Orders on the 15th Inst. which were issued to quiet the minds of the General Officers & to remove a Spirit of jealousy which but too apparently was rising among them. These contain my ideas of the Inspector's office & I have reason to think are generally agreeable to the Army. While I am on this Subject, I must do justice to the Baron's intelligence, zeal & indefatigable industry, from which we have experienced very happy effects. . . .

And now having taken steps to denature the objectionable features of the Baron's plan, Washington replied to his letter:

> . . . I have not the least objection to your going to York and am persuaded that after having seen the difficulties which opposed the establishment of the inspectorship according to your first ideas, you will, from a desire to promote the service, lay before Congress such a Plan as will be most likely to obviate the causes of disagreement, and comprehend all the essential duties of your office. . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

MONMOUTH[1]

1

ON June 17, while the Baron was preparing for his journey to York, he was ordered to attend a council of war. It was reported that the enemy had begun to evacuate Philadelphia. Heavy-laden baggage wagons and a considerable body of troops had already crossed the Delaware. Evidently the enemy intended to march across New Jersey to New York. Washington submitted the situation to his generals and sought their advice. It was his own inclination to seek a decisive victory in New Jersey. But if he expected a council of war to propose such a policy, he was disappointed. Wayne and Cadwallader were the only officers who frankly advocated it. Steuben presented a more conservative view. The situation was still obscure; the enemy might be making a feint to draw the Americans from their strong position. He therefore proposed that the army should hold its present position until the hostile objectives were better known. In the meantime a strong detachment should march at once toward the fords of the Delaware north of Trenton. This detachment would then be in readiness to cross the river and serve as an advance guard for the main body, should the enemy march to New York.

Lee did not believe the enemy would march toward New York. In the treasonable plan of campaign he had prepared for them, he had insisted that they should seek a decision in the Chesapeake Bay region. He now had the vanity to believe that Clinton would follow his advice. But in any event, Lee was opposed to aggressive action. He pointed out that the Continentals could not hope to cope with British regulars. He completely ignored the new skill and discipline so recently imparted by Steuben. A number of the other generals agreed with Lee. They were still influenced by his high professional reputation.

2

NOTWITHSTANDING the news from Philadelphia, the Baron set out for York the morning of the eighteenth. After his departure, definite news reached Washington that the English Army had evacuated the city and was assembled on the Jersey shore. At about three o'clock in the afternoon, the American advanced troops under General Lee set out for the crossing of the Delaware. The main body under Washington himself was to march at dawn on the nineteenth.

Steuben and his staff were well on their way toward York when news reached him that the campaign had actually opened. He immediately returned to join the army. As the troops had left Valley Forge, he decided to enter Philadelphia and to take quarters there until the army should complete its crossing into New Jersey. Says Duponceau:

> . . . The first observation I made on entering Philadelphia was that the city had been left by the British and Hessians in the most filthy condition. . . . The evacuation of the city had put us all in good spirits, and we enjoyed ourselves very well, the filth notwithstanding. . . . The next day a house was provided for us in New Street, where we staid but a few days. . . . That quarter of the city was inhabited almost entirely by Germans . . . so that Baron Steuben fancied himself again in his native country. . . . We were however, not captivated with the delights of Capua ; we bade adieu to Philadelphia and all its German attractions, and joined General Washington's army in New Jersey.[2]

3

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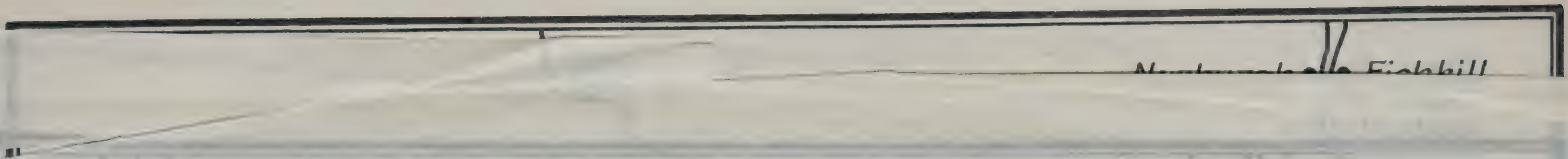
Newburgh
Fishkill

2

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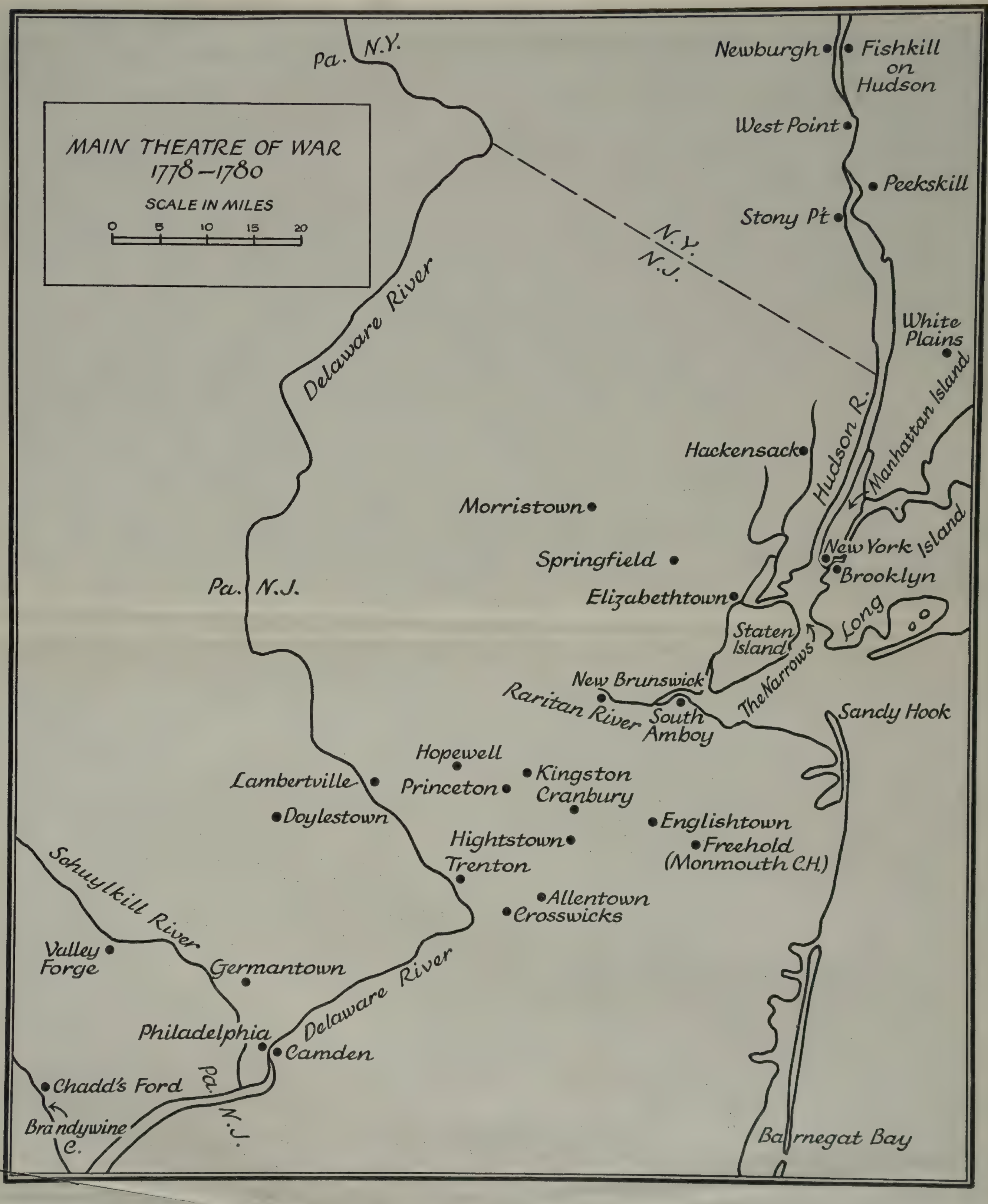
MAIN THEATRE OF WAR
1778–1780
SCALE IN MILES
0 5 10 15 20
Pa.
N.Y.
Newburgh
Fishkill on Hudson
West Point
Peekskill
Stony Pt
N.Y.
N.J.
White Plains
Manhattan Island
Hudson R.
Hackensack
Delaware River
Morristown
Springfield
New York
Brooklyn
Long Island
Elizabethtown
Pa.
N.J.
Staten Island
The Narrows
New Brunswick
Raritan River
South Amboy
Sandy Hook
Hopewell
Kingston
Lambertville
Princeton
Cranbury
Doylestown
Englishtown
Hightstown
Freehold (Monmouth C.H.)
Trenton
Allentown
Crosswicks
Schuylkill River
Valley Forge
Germantown
Delaware River
Philadelphia
Camden
Chadd's Ford
Pa.
N.J.
Brandywine C.
Barnegat Bay

phia, on Thursday the eighteenth. By the twenty-third the head of his column was near Crosswicks, about seventeen miles south-south-east of Hopewell. Clinton had been able to march only thirty miles in six days. The weather had been hot and rainy, the roads bad, and the Jersey militia had torn up the bridges. Clinton's force was about equal in numbers to Washington's,* but he was encumbered by a lumbering wagon train over twelve miles long. It was not yet certain whether he planned to march to South Amboy or Sandy Hook. But, in any event, his flank would be exposed to Washington and with his wagon train he would have little power of maneuver. Whichever way he marched, his enemy with forces concentrated would threaten his left flank.

Here Washington had a chance for decisive victory such as few generals have ever had. Neither Napoleon nor Frederick the Great ever had a more promising opportunity. It would only be necessary for the advance corps to strike suddenly at the flank of that lumbering column. Then, in the confusion, Washington could come in with his main body and strike the decisive blow. With such a plan, loyally executed, Clinton's army must have been doomed. In fact this was Washington's plan and he was confident of its wisdom. But, unfortunately, it was his custom to do something that Fredericks and Napoleons never do. Instead of issuing his orders, he consulted his generals. And now they were assembled in a council of war at Hopewell.

4

MOST of the generals appreciated the opportunity. But their senior, Charles Lee, opposed any aggressive action. Again he insisted that the Continentals should not risk battle with British regulars. Clinton's march should not be seriously opposed. He said it would be better "to build a golden bridge for the enemy rather than to attack such disciplined troops." And Lee's opinion influenced the council. He still enjoyed the deference that modest citizen soldiers are disposed to yield to professionals.

---

* Clinton's force numbered about 13,000. Washington had about that same number of Continentals in addition to the New Jersey militia.

As usual with councils of war, this council adopted a compromise. It recommended that a detachment of 1,500 men should be sent out at once "to act as occasion may serve on the enemy's left flank and rear," and that the main body should "maintain a relative position so as to be able to act as circumstances may require." At first all of the generals advocated the compromise with the single exception of Wayne. He refused to sign the report. He urged Washington to strengthen the contact troops, to place the whole advance corps under a major general with orders to attack the enemy at the first favorable opportunity, and to hold him until the main body could join the battle. This was advice that Washington relished, but of all his generals, Wayne alone dared to propose it.

A little later Greene changed his mind. He now endorsed Wayne's view and proposed that two whole brigades of infantry should join the advanced troops. Still later in the day, Lafayette wrote to Washington that Steuben, DuPortail, Wayne, Patterson and Greene agreed with him that 2,000 to 2,500 men should be sent to the front with an aggressive mission. In the course of his argument for offensive action, he wrote:

> The other five gentlemen are of my opinion, but principally Portail and baron de Steuben have begged me, if the matter was yet spoken of, to explain to you in English, how sorry, how distressed they are to see that we were going to lose an occasion which may be reputed as one of the finest ever offered.

One can imagine the Baron's feelings when he realized that Clinton, in spite of himself and with no possible means of avoiding his danger, was committed to an exposure of flank such as had been so fatal to the French Army at Rossbach. This had given Frederick a decisive victory against numerical odds of three to one. Here the numbers were about equal, but Washington was free to maneuver while Clinton was tied by his wagon train to a narrow road. This made the actual tactical odds overwhelmingly in favor of the Americans.

Washington now decided to risk the hazards of a decisive battle. As a compliment to his senior major general, he offered the command of the advance troops to Lee. But Lee considered it beneath his dignity as "second-in-command" to lead so small a detachment. So the honor was given to Lafayette, who was senior in rank to all the other generals available for the assignment. The marquis was not yet twenty-one years old—a very young soldier for such an important command. But he was undoubtedly equal to the responsibility, as he proved to be three years later in much more difficult operations in Virginia.

5

IN the meantime, Clinton's objective was still uncertain. The head of his column was now near Allentown. There the road forked, one branch leading to South Amboy and the other through Freehold (Monmouth Court House) to Sandy Hook. Which road would he take? Here was a problem in reconnoissance for a General Staff officer. It must be solved at once. The Baron undertook it as a volunteer. He did not consider it beneath his dignity as a major general to perform the duty of a General Staff subaltern when that duty was essential to the public service. He mounted at once, with Walker, Duponceau and a few orderlies, and rode toward Allentown. Early the next morning he sent a courier with the news that the enemy's objective was Monmouth Court House. Washington therefore moved his main body from Hopewell to Kingston, seven miles nearer Monmouth Court House.

After dispatching this information to Washington, the Baron exerted himself to transmit it to the more or less scattered detachments of the advance corps. The following dispatch to General Scott shows the technique of a trained General Staff officer:

Hites Town, June 25, 3 o'clock.

Sir:—By intelligence already forwarded you are no doubt acquainted that the enemy have certainly taken the direct Road from Allentown to Monmouth Court House. I therefore submit to your Judgment whether it would not be best to advance your Corps as far as this place. I make no doubt you will communicate the intelligence you receive to the Commanding Officers of our Advanced Corps.[8] . . .

The Baron had no authority to give orders to General Scott. But it was his duty as a General Staff officer to send him pertinent information and to recommend appropriate action. He was exerting his influence on the situation but he carefully avoided any assumption of authority. At present, though a major general and Scott's senior in rank, he was only a reconnoissance officer on a special mission from headquarters.

6

IN the meantime, Lafayette's advanced troops were operating on Clinton's left flank and rear. In the course of the day this "advanced corps" was reënforced to about 5,000 men. This left about 8,000 under Washington's immediate command.

During the day Clinton had continued his march on Monmouth Court House. General Knyphausen with his Hessians and the long baggage train went ahead. Then came Lord Cornwallis' division which was charged with the security of the left flank and rear. The lumbering wagon train set a slow pace. The weather was unusually hot and humid even for New Jersey at the end of June. Clinton's sweaty soldiers in the crowded, stifling ranks were tortured by hosts of Jersey mosquitoes. These patriotic insects strongly supported their fellow citizens of the Jersey militia who were wrecking culverts and firing in from the flank. Many of the invaders were so bitten and swollen that their own bunkies could scarcely recognize them. They marched all day in the blazing sun. That night they lay along the road and were drenched by heavy showers. Their advanced units were now three or four miles southwest of Monmouth Court House. Their rear was six miles farther back toward Allentown. The wagons were parked in the fields to the right of the road.

At sunset Washington's main body moved forward to Cranbury about thirteen miles from Freehold. His advance troops under Lafayette covered the country between him and the enemy.

Steuben and his officers had had a busy day. He was near Allentown at dawn. At three o'clock he had written to General Scott from Hightstown. At eight o'clock from Englishtown, he reported the location of Clinton's bivouacs. From there, supported by Colonel Moylan's cavalry detachment, he continued his reconnoissance far into the night. He too had suffered from Jersey heat and Jersey mosquitoes.

7

CLINTON resumed his march early Friday morning, but he moved only a short distance. By noon he was again in camp in and near Freehold. During that day Washington's main body was encamped in and near Cranbury. The headquarters of Lafayette's advanced corps was now established at Englishtown, about seven miles from Monmouth Court House.

By this time Washington was having troubles. Since the advance corps had been reënforced, General Lee wanted to command it. He now felt that it would reflect on his "honor" as "second-in-command" to have so large a detachment commanded by one of his juniors. Washington unfortunately granted his request. It was clearly understood, however, that Lee was to adhere to Lafayette's plans for vigorous action against the enemy.

During the day there was much confusion. The change in commanders was difficult to accomplish in so scattered a command. The day was far spent before Lafayette knew that he had been displaced. If Clinton should march early Saturday he would probably get away before the newly organized American command could act. But Clinton did not intend to march. He was apparently inviting attack. Friday afternoon, he ordered his troops to hold their positions near Monmouth Court House for another day.

Washington was agreeably surprised to learn that the English were still in position on Saturday morning. He was greatly concerned, however, lest they should march before he could complete his arrangements for battle. During the morning, the Baron worked his way to a hill about two miles from the Court House. From there with his spy glass he was able to observe a portion of the enemy's camp. At about noon, in a message to Washington, he wrote: "They have some tents pitched & their Horses are at Pasture & not the least appearance of moving."

8

THE shift in the American command was completed by Saturday morning. By that time Lafayette had reported to Lee and had given him all the information in his possession. The new commander's mission was clear. It was his duty to hold the enemy until Washington could enter the battle with the main body. In order to accomplish this he should have explored the ground between him and the enemy and the roads from Freehold to Sandy Hook. He should have detailed a detachment under an able officer to obstruct the progress of the wagon train at the proper time. He should have selected a position from which to launch a vigorous attack Sunday morning. He should have arranged to guide his troops to that position during Saturday night, and finally, he should have communicated his proposed dispositions to his brigade commanders and to Washington.

But Lee did nothing. He spent Saturday morning puttering about his camp at Englishtown. He made no reconnoissance. He made no preparations at all. If he had deliberately planned to give Clinton a "golden bridge" for his escape to New York he could not have acted more effectively.

Shortly after noon, Lee was summoned to headquarters. There Washington told him that he had decided to attack early Sunday morning. Lafayette, Wayne, Maxwell and Scott were present and all four understood exactly what Washington wanted. When he left headquarters, Lee assured Washington that he would assemble his subordinate commanders at five o'clock. This would give him an opportunity to secure and transmit the latest information, to explain his plan and to give each commander his part in its execution.

After his conference with Washington, Lee returned to Englishtown and still did nothing. Lafayette, Wayne and Maxwell reported to him at five o'clock as directed. But Lee gave them no plan, sought no information from them and gave them no orders except to be in readiness in the morning. When Scott reported half an hour late, the conference was already over.

In these circumstances, Washington's plan was already doomed to failure. Lee and his troops were far away from any possible point of attack. Even if he acted vigorously in the morning he would be too late. By the time he could reach the battlefield that he should have selected and exploited in advance, Clinton's wagon train would be clear of Freehold—with his whole army free at last from that unwieldy encumbrance.

9

LEE turned out his troops shortly after dawn on Sunday. He gave no orders for concerted action. He permitted Wayne and other commanders to drift forward but without definite instructions. Later they ran into Clinton's covering troops and there was a series of uncoördinated skirmishes. At one time Lee maneuvered to surround a part of the hostile rear guard. He was so elated with the prospect of this trifling success that he sent back word to Washington who was now on his way to the front with the main body. This was the only message that Washington received from Lee during the morning. It misled him into believing that the advance corps was executing its important mission.

A little later the advanced troops began to fall back. There was no panic and, at this time, no serious pursuit. There were no more orders for the retreat than there had been for the advance. As the Continentals fell back, Clinton reënforced his rear guard and began to press them. Up to this time, he would have been content to escape with his wagon train. Now, there seemed to be a chance to give the Americans a thorough whipping. As more of his troops came up from the rear, he organized a vigorous pursuit.

When Washington passed through Englishtown ahead of the main body, he believed that he was marching toward victory. His only message from Lee had been encouraging. He did not know that the whole advance corps was falling back in disorder. Indeed he did not dream of the retreat until he met the fugitives coming back. A little later he met Lee. His anger was volcanic. In response to questions, Lee reminded his commander that he had always opposed attacking British regulars. Washington replied that in that case he should not have sought the command, and that in any event he should have obeyed orders.

But there was no time for talking. A little while ago, Washington had been marching toward victory. Now, it was a toss up whether he could save his army. There is no more difficult problem in tactics than to check an enemy who has more than a third of your men on the run and crowding back on your marching column. As the disorganized and exhausted troops fell back and passed on to the rear, Washington seized a line of defense east of Englishtown. As the battalions of the main body came up he placed them in position along Wenrock Brook. The gallant Wayne and his men held an advance position until the new line was formed. There the British grenadiers discovered that, at last, the Americans had learned how to fight with the bayonet. First, the British were repulsed in a strong frontal attack. They were then defeated in attempts to turn Washington's flanks: first on the right and then on the left.

10

LATE Saturday night or very early Sunday morning, Steuben rode out to seek a position from which he could observe the approaching battle. This was probably by direct orders from general headquarters, for John Laurens, Washington's aide-de-camp, rode with him. The Baron and his staff were in position early. He could see signs of activity in the enemy's camp. He sent Walker to Lee with the information that the wagon train was getting under way. Now would be the time for the Americans to strike. But nothing happened. There were no signs of vigorous attack or pursuit. When it was apparent that the opportunity had passed, the Baron rode back to Englishtown.

On his arrival at the village, he went into a house and took a nap. He sorely needed it. He had been in the saddle nearly all night. For five days, day and night, he had been doing the duty of a youthful *Quartiermeister Leutnant*. He was convinced that Clinton was well on his way to Sandy Hook. There would be no chance of a battle that day. At last he could have a bit of rest.

After a good nap, the Baron rode forward to join Washington. Soon after he started he was surprised to hear cannon shots from the front, and setting spurs to his horse and galloping ahead, he found Washington forming line of battle as Lee's exhausted troops fell back through his position in disorder. Steuben exerted himself wherever he could. He helped the formation of the troops on the left flank. He assisted General Knox in posting the artillery. Presently Washington saw him and sent him back to reorganize Lee's shattered command.

Nobody could do this so well as Steuben. All of the men knew him and trusted him. He reformed the battalions as he had done so often at Valley Forge. With the assistance of his staff he soon had them in order. During their retreat they had suffered more from the great heat than from panic. The habit of discipline was quickly restored. When Washington sent for them later, the Baron marched them back to the front in perfect order. Alexander Hamilton saw them as they returned to the battlefield. Later he told North that until then he had never conceived the full meaning of discipline.[4]

11

IN the meantime the British, having been repulsed in all of their assaults, had fallen back to a night position where they bivouacked. Washington issued orders for an attack at dawn. But about midnight Clinton silently stole away. He joined his wagon train and was soon safe under the guns of the fleet near Sandy Hook. There he embarked and proceeded to Manhattan by water. Lee's strategy had triumphed. The Americans had given Clinton a "golden bridge" to New York.

We have a brief but masterly summary of the battle of Monmouth by a competent witness who was present in person. A few days after the battle, John Laurens wrote to his father:

> From a second view of the ground, as well as the accounts I have since had of the enemy's strength and designs, it is evident to me that Mr. Clinton's whole flying army would have fallen into our hands, but for a defect of abilities or good will in the commanding officer of our advanced corps. His precipitate retreat spread a baleful influence everywhere. The most sanguine hope scarcely extended farther, when the commander in chief rallied his troops, than to an orderly retreat: but by his intrepidity and presence of mind, a firm line of troops was formed in a good position.[5] . . .

Monmouth marks an epoch in the history of the Continental Army. On that day and always thereafter, it proved itself, battalion for battalion, a match for the British regulars. If Lee had obeyed Washington's orders, the battlefield would have been farther to the front. If the Continentals had fought as well where Lee should have fought as they fought later at Wenrock Brook, Washington would have won a decisive victory. But even after hours of incompetent leadership, confusion and retreat, the army responded to the lesson of discipline and repulsed a pursuing enemy confident of victory. There can be no higher test of soldiership. This new combat efficiency was the creation of Steuben's genius. The Baron gave Washington a fit instrument for victory. Lee's incompetence and disloyalty robbed him of it.

According to Kapp, Steuben commanded the left wing in the action at Wenrock Brook. This has been taken into the record by other historians, but there is no authority for it except the following excerpt from the Baron's letter to Frank: "At the battle of Monmouth, last year, I commanded on the left wing of the first line and I was fortunate enough to decide the day to our advantage."[6] Here Kapp failed to see that the Baron was merely indulging in poetic license for the delectation of an old friend.

12

STEUBEN's career just missed an inglorious end when he was out scouting the morning before the battle. Kapp says:

> When thus reconnoitering, Steuben suddenly heard a rustling in the wood, and looking toward it, saw two of the enemy's light horse emerging. Steuben had just time to discharge his pistols before he whirled his horse and leaped a fence, his hat falling off as he rode. After this narrow escape, he returned to the camp. The horsemen did not fire at him, but hallooed to him to stop.
>
> The two aids had gone in succession nearer the British than Steuben. These, he supposed, were captured, the horsemen having passed between him and them. While making his report at headquarters, he was surprised by the entrance of Walker and his companion, and exclaimed:
>
> "How is this? I thought you were taken prisoner."
>
> "Oh, no," said Walker, "they were intent on the high prize, and overlooked us."
>
> "Have you brought my hat?"
>
> "Oh, no, Baron we had not time."
>
> After the battle, some prisoners were brought to headquarters, and one of them, after being examined, addressing Steuben said: "I believe general, I had the honor of seeing you yesterday, and thought to get a more splendid prize than your hat."
>
> "Why did you not fire?"
>
> "You were recognized by General Knyphausen, and our orders were rather to take you, if we could do it without harming you."[7]

Kapp got this story from Mulligan, who as a young man got it from Steuben and Walker. Though it rests on hearsay evidence in the memory of a very old man, there was some foundation for it. For five days after the battle, John Laurens wrote to his father:

> Genl Steuben, his aids and your son, narrowly escaped being surrounded by the British horse, early in the morning of the action.

We reconnoitered them rather too nearly, and L^d Cornwallis sent the dragoons of his guard to make us prisoners. Gen^l Clinton saw the Baron's star and the whole pursuit was directed at him: but we all escaped, the dragoons fearing an ambuscade of infantry. (A dragoon deserted from the enemy just informs us of this.)[8]

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BARON FINDS HIMSELF

1

AFTER the battle of Monmouth, Washington decided to unite his army with that of Gates at White Plains, New York. Admiral D'Estaing was off the coast with a French fleet and transports. This gave hopes of a successful joint attack against Clinton's army on Manhattan. On July 1 Washington appointed a court martial for the trial of General Lee. On the second he concentrated his troops at New Brunswick, New Jersey.

The court martial complicated the plans for the march to the Hudson. As most of the other senior officers were to be members or important witnesses, the Baron was assigned to command a division. The left wing under De Kalb marched on the fifth of July. The right wing commanded by Steuben followed on the sixth. The march was in easy stages. If D'Estaing should get control of New York Harbor, the Americans would cross the Hudson near the city. If not, there would be no safe crossing south of Stony Point.

The Baron was delighted with his new assignment. He was now in command of troops. He would prove himself so fine a troop leader that he would never be returned to staff duty. He was at last on the sure road to military glory. But the appointment was unpopular in the army. As John Laurens wrote to his father:

> Unfortunately there is a prejudice against foreigners in many of our officers. It is not without uneasiness that some of them see Baron de Steuben, who has certainly rendered us very important services, and who is without doubt as capable of commanding as any Major General we have, appointed to the temporary command of a division.[1] . . .

An extract from Washington's order book reveals the general sentiment of the army at this time:

> At a General Court Martial in the Right wing of the army at Water-Sisson, July 9th, 1778—Lieut. Col. Meade, President—Captain Lipscomb, Acting Quartermaster General to the Division Commanded by Majr. General Baron de Steuben, tried for treating the General in a disrespectful manner.
>
> After considering the Charge and Evidence the Court are unanimously of the opinion that Captain Lipscomb is not guilty of the Charge exhibited against him and do acquit him with honor.
>
> The General approves the Sentence: He is willing to believe that Captain Lipscomb did not intend that disrespect to Baron de Steuben which the Baron apprehended; at the same time he must observe that there was an Impropriety in Captain Lipscomb's taking quarters in a house destined for the General commanding the Division.

We have no record of the testimony before the court. But Washington's comment on its findings is significant. The acquittal "with honor" indicates that Steuben's authority was not supported by the sentiment of the army. If Captain Lipscomb had preëmpted General Wayne's billet, we may be sure that there would have been a different verdict.

2

THE army finally crossed the Hudson at Kings Ferry, just south of Stony Point, and thence marched southward to White Plains. On June 22, just before the last day's march, we find in the order of the day:

> When the troops arrive at their new camp, Baron de Steuben will please to resume his office of Inspector General and will make his arrangements accordingly.
>
> He will please to accept the thanks of the Commander-in-Chief for his Extra Services in conducting the Right Wing of the Army from Brunswick to its present Ground & for his Care and Attention to the Troops during the March.

The Baron was furious when he read this. He protested vigorously and announced his intention to resign and return to Europe. He wanted to remain in command of troops. He was disgusted with the inspectorship. Its legal status had never been settled by a Congress. And he had found a new annoyance at White Plains. The inspector general of Gates's army, Colonel de la Neuville, claimed an independent commission from Congress and refused to recognize Steuben as his superior. The Baron therefore wrote to Washington requesting that he be excused from the duties of the inspectorship until its legal status should be finally fixed by Congress. In conclusion he wrote: "In the meantime with your Excellency's permission, I will take this opportunity of making a tour to Philadelphia to see my friends."

After reading the Baron's letter, Washington wrote to President Laurens:

> . . . The Baron Steuben will also be in Philadelphia in a day or two. The ostensible cause for his going, is to fix more certainly with Congress his duties as Inspector General, which is necessary. However, I am disposed to believe that the real one is to obtain an actual command in the line as a Major General. . . . I regard and I esteem the baron as an assiduous, intelligent and experienced Officer, but you may rely on it, if such is his view, and he should accomplish it, we shall have the whole line of Brigadiers in confusion. They have said but little about his rank as Major General, as he has not had an actual command over them; but when we marched from Brunswick, as there were but few Major Generals, and almost the whole of the Brigadiers were engaged at the Court Martial, either as members or witnesses, I appointed him *pro tempore,* and so expressed it in orders, to conduct a Wing to the North river. This measure, though founded in evident necessity, and not designed to produce to the Brigadiers the least possible injury, excited great uneasiness and has been the cause of Complaint. . . .

Washington was greatly annoyed by this incident. That same day he wrote to Gouverneur Morris, one of his friends in Congress:

> . . . Baron Steuben, I now find, is also wanting to quit his inspectorship for a command in the line. This will be productive of much discontent to the brigadiers. In a word, though I think the baron an excellent officer, I do most devoutly wish that we had not a single foreigner among us, except the Marquis de Lafayette, who acts upon very different principles from those which govern the rest. . . .

On the twenty-sixth the Baron set out for Philadelphia, bearing the following from Washington to President Laurens:

> Baron Steuben will have the honor of delivering you this. I am extremely sorry that this gentleman's situation and views seem to have determined him to quit the service, in which he has been heretofore and is capable still of being extensively useful. . . . But I find that he . . . resolves not to continue in the Service unless he can hold an actual command in the line.
>
> Justice concurring with inclination constrains me to testify that the baron has, in every instance, discharged the several trusts imposed in him with great zeal and ability, so as to give him the fullest title to my esteem as a brave, indefatigable, judicious and experienced officer. I regret there should be a necessity that his services should be lost to the army; at the same time I think it my duty explicitly to observe to Congress that his desire of having an actual and permanent command in the line can not be complied with without wounding the feelings of a number of officers whose rank and merits give them every claim to attention, and that the doing of it would be productive of much dissatisfaction and ill consequences. This does not proceed from any personal objections on the part of those officers against the baron; on the contrary, most of them whom I heard speak of him, express a high sense of his military worth. It proceeds from motives of another nature, which are too obvious to need particular examination, or may be summed up in this—that they conceive such a step would be injurious to their essential rights and just expectations. . . .

3

STEUBEN arrived in Philadelphia about July 29. During his long ride he probably thought better of his threat to resign.

Hamilton, Walker and his other friends feared that he would return to his affluent position in Europe. They did not know then, as we know now, that he had no such easy line of retreat. There would be no place or welcome for him in Paris or Karlsruhe or Hechingen. He soon recognized the facts of the situation. His only hope for the future lay in America. He must accept the inspectorship as his only field of service. Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia, Laurens, Boudinot, Peters and other friends made it clear to him that Congress would support Washington in denying him the command of troops. They did sustain him, however, in his controversy with Neuville. It was decided that all other inspectors must accept Steuben as their chief. Thereupon Neuville resigned in disgust and returned to France.

With reference to the inspectorship, Steuben wrote to Washington:

> Immediately upon my arrival here Congress were pleased to appoint a Committee to hear my proposals. . . . I am preparing a plan for the establishment of an inspection and . . . it shall be my endeavor to form it on such principles as may be agreeable to your Excellency & the army in general. . . . In preparing this plan . . . all personal views will be laid aside. . . .

Steuben's plan was accompanied by a "memorial"[2] in which he explained the important duties of the inspector general in the several armies of Europe. But, he observes: "In foreign services there is an established military code and it is by that code the inspector judges whether the troops are in order or not, while in our service that code is yet to be written." By "military code," the Baron referred to drill books for the several branches of the service, field service regulations, and rules governing the care of property and other phases of military administration. It would therefore be the first duty of an American inspector general to prepare such a code for the approval of the commander in chief and Congress. It must then be printed and issued to the army. All this must be done with the greatest possible dispatch as a first step toward real efficiency.

The committee was favorably impressed with Steuben's plan and prepared a draft of resolutions designed to carry it into effect. Congress referred this draft to Washington on August 20. He returned it on September 12 with his comments. While he approved Steuben's general aims, he found that the proposed resolutions would give the inspector general too much independent authority. After criticizing the proposed resolutions severally, he concluded:

> In general it may be remarked, that this plan of the inspectorship is upon too extensive a Scale, and comprehends powers so numerous and enlarged, as will naturally expose it to the jealousy and disapprobation of the Army; and will be really injurious to the rights of the superior officers in general. . . .

4

BEFORE the proposed resolutions returned to Congress with Washington's objections, alarming news came to Philadelphia. A joint attack by the French and Americans against Newport had failed. General Sullivan and his troops were in a critical situation. Congress therefore resolved on August 28: "That Baron Steuben be requested forthwith to repair to Rhode Island and give his advice and assistance to General Sullivan and the army under his command." Upon the receipt of this resolution, the Baron wrote to President Laurens:

> Nothing will hinder my Instant Departure, and in order to make the greatest Speed, I leave all my baggage behind, taking only a Couple of Shirts along with me. . . . As I do not think I have money enough to defray the Expenses of the Road, I would be very much obliged to your Excellency for ordering five hundred Dollars to be paid to me.[8] . . .

The records of the pay office show that the Baron duly received his $500. But the allowance was less liberal than appears at first glance. At that time, a Continental dollar was worth less than twenty cents in specie.

5

BY dint of hard riding Steuben got as far as White Plains on August 31. There Washington stopped his further progress. The commander in chief considered that sending "advice and assistance" to General Sullivan was his business and not the business of Congress. If his staff officer was no longer needed in Philadelphia, he would attend to his future employment. He therefore directed the Baron to resume the training of the troops which had been sadly neglected since the army left Valley Forge.

Thereupon the Baron wrote to President Laurens:

> My sudden departure from Philadelphia has brought a great derangement in my private affairs. . . . My whole baggage, . . . etc. are yet in Philadelphia. . . . I beg your Excellency would take the trouble to order my servants to depart as soon as possible. For I find myself here destitute of Everything.[4]

He also requested the president of Congress to coöperate with "Mr. R^{d} Peters" in the payment of a "Taylor and a Sadler" whose bills he had left unpaid. When the Baron's servants finally left Philadelphia, his cook took with him some plated ware which had been borrowed from Mrs. Peters. On this head the Baron wrote to Peters:

> I don't really know what to say at my cook's having taken away all the Plate at my Quarters in Philadelphia. . . . I could not, nevertheless, chide the Lad very hard, for without his seasonable theft, I should now be reduced to eat on the bare boards.[5]

6

STEUBEN resumed his duties at headquarters in a new spirit. He now relinquished all hope of active military command and accepted Washington's view that the powers of the inspector general must be the limited powers of a staff officer. From this time on, faithful and self-forgetting service to Washington became the rule of his life. His experience in army administration, his knowledge of military theory and his complete subordination made him the trusted adviser of the commander in chief. More and more he was accepted by the whole army as a walking encyclopedia on every phase of military lore. Now that he had relinquished his schemes of personal glory, the real period of his usefulness began. This new attitude of the Baron's was fortunate for himself, for Washington, and for the American cause. He was not needed as a division commander. Other officers, then in the army, could equal and perhaps surpass him as a troop leader. But probably no officer in the world could have replaced him in his special field. He had had a technical training for staff duty that was then unknown outside of Prussia. He had an adaptability to American conditions that could not be expected in many other foreign officers. He was unique in his special field even as Washington was unique in his greater field. There was no understudy in the whole theater of war who could have played the role of either.

Steuben's first task was to renew the systematic training of the army. Having got the drills and maneuvers once more under way, he inaugurated an inspection service under Washington's orders without waiting for further action by Congress. With the aid of his subinspectors, he visited every military organization in the army, exposing its defects in discipline, in administration and in supply and equipment. His criticism was searching and severe but it was always constructive. When he exposed a fault he sought a practical remedy for it. When the remedy was within the power of the local commanding officer, it was generally applied at once. Here the Baron's professional prestige was so high that his advice generally had the weight of authority. All defects that could not be corrected by local commanders were then carefully digested, tabulated and reported to Washington with concrete practical recommendations for remedial action. It would be impossible to overestimate the value of Steuben's services in thus conserving the time and energy of the overburdened commander in chief.

After the middle of September the army held a position near Fredericksburg within easy marching distance of West Point. Here, in the intervals between inspections, Steuben commenced preparing his regulations for the infantry—the first part of his proposed military code. As cold weather approached, Washington moved the army into winter quarters. The year's campaign had been disappointing. He had narrowly missed decisive victory at Monmouth. Later, he had hoped to capture New York. But his army was too small to undertake that enterprise unaided, and his plans for French coöperation had failed. On November 4, D'Estaing sailed for the West Indies. On the thirteenth Steuben left camp to spend the winter in Philadelphia. There he would write his book and urge legislation for an inspectorship such as Washington desired.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BLUE BOOK

1

BY the end of November Steuben's book was well under way. Lieutenant Colonel Fleury, a brilliant young French officer, assisted him in preparing the original French text. This was then translated into English by Duponceau and Walker. The diagrams required as illustrations were drawn by Captain L'Enfant whose talent was to be immortalized later in his plans for the city of Washington. But on December 2, the Baron laid down his pen and prepared to draw his sword. After reading a passage in the record of the Lee court martial, he sent Ben Walker to General Lee with the following challenge:

> It has been reported to me, sir, that in your defense you have allowed yourself to cast indecent reflections on my account. I made haste to Philadelphia to inquire into the matter, and I find the report confirmed by the Journal of the Court Martial . . . where I read the paragraph beginning: "Of all the distant spectators & c. & c."
>
> Were I in my own country where my reputation is long ago established, I should put myself above your epigrams and would have despised them. But here I am a stranger. You have offended me; I desire you will give me satisfaction.
>
> You will choose the place, time and arms; but as I do not like to be a distant or slow spectator, I desire to see you as near and as soon as possible.
>
> You will explain to Captain Walker, who will deliver this to you, if your present situation will permit you to bring this affair to as quick a conclusion as I wish it.[1]

But the combat did not take place. The Baron accepted the following explanation from Lee:

> I believe you have misunderstood the sense of this article of my

> defense. Very likely the sentence "very distant spectators," has appeared to you as a reflection cast upon your courage. If such be your opinion, I assure you that I had not the least idea of it. I am ready to acknowledge it to all the gentlemen of your acquaintance, to all the world if you will.[2] . . .

A few days later, Hamilton wrote to the Baron:

> I have read your letter to Lee with pleasure. . . . Considering the pointedness and severity of your expressions, his answer was certainly a very modest one and proved that he had not a violent appetite for so close a tete-à-tete as you seemed disposed to insist upon.[3]

2

DURING the months of January and February, the Baron was greatly embarrassed financially. It is true that he was generally improvident, but the depreciation of the currency made it impossible for even the thriftiest officer to meet his expenses from his pay. The Baron's stipend as major general was $166.67 per month. But in January, 1779, his month's pay in Continental paper was worth only $20 in real money. Fortunately, he and his officers were saved from starvation because they were entitled to rations in addition to their pay. The Baron as a major general drew fifteen rations from the commissary, Lieutenant Colonel Fleury five, Captains Walker and Duponceau three each. This enabled them to run their mess even when they had no money. Their rations gave them a surplus of meat, flour, beans and other staples which could be swapped for rum, sugar and other luxuries. In this way, except when the commissary storehouse was empty, the Baron could give a dinner even when he could not buy a pair of boots.

Steuben explained his financial difficulties to his friends, Timothy Pickering and Richard Peters of the Board of War. On January 22 they reported to Congress as follows:

> The Board having frequently conversed with Baron Steuben are clearly convinced, not only from the little value of our money and the extraordinary expences to which he is liable, but from his posi-

tive assurances, *that he has been obliged to draw a very large sum from his estate in Europe, which, altho' sufficient for his moderate support there, will not afford a diminution of the capital.* He has, however, been obliged to draw such an amount as to decrease his capital, and from all circumstances there appears to be a probability of losing this valuable Officer unless some allowance is made him sufficient for his support.

He appears to be frugal and moderate in his expences and by no means of an extravagant turn. He desires either to have his expences borne, of which he will render an account, and in that case he will throw in his pay; or that Congress will be pleased to ascertain the sum they will allow him for his support. He also seems to expect some indemnification for the expences of his voyage and other extra expences. As he is a foreigner of estimation in Europe, it cannot be expected that he will make those pecuniary sacrifices American Officers submit to, and more especially as *he has inducements to return to Europe, where from his character and connexions, he will not be at a loss for employment.** [4] . . .

The report concludes with the recommendation that the Baron be granted a monthly expense allowance of $84 and $4,000 to reimburse him for past expenses.

On February 18, Congress finally passed a resolution fixing the permanent organization of the inspection service in accordance with Washington's recommendation. In the last clause of the resolution, the inspector general was granted $84 a month for expenses. No provision was made for his past expenses. By this time a Continental dollar was worth about ten cents in specie. But the depreciation had just begun. On April 23, Washington wrote to John Jay: "A wagon-load of money will scarcely purchase a wagon-load of provisions."

3

IN the meantime the first half of Steuben's book was sent to Washington for approval. On February 26 he wrote: "I very much approve the conciseness of the work founded on your general principle of rejecting everything superfluous." And again on March 11 after reading the second half:

---

* The italics are mine.

> As the fine season is advancing, you will, I flatter myself, shortly have the satisfaction, so rarely enjoyed by authors, of seeing your precepts reduced to practice: and I hope your success will be equal to the merits of your work.

On March 29, Congress passed a resolution approving Steuben's *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*. A week later it was resolved: "That Baron Steuben, Inspector General, be informed by the President, that Congress entertain a high sense of his merit, but especially in the system of order and discipline formed and presented by him to Congress."

The Baron's little book comprised drill regulations for the infantry. It also included field service regulations and an administrative manual sufficient for the needs of the whole army in that day. Its "Instructions" for soldiers of the several grades from colonel to private are concise summaries of each person's part in the team play of an efficient army. These were of special value in a new organization without traditions such as the Continental Army. They contained those essentials of military wisdom and practice which are sanctioned only by "custom of the service" in the older armies.

The book is remarkable for its conciseness. It omits nothing essential and includes nothing superfluous. It remained the official military manual until the War of 1812. Many of its features still survive in official manuals and still more in the traditions and customs of the service. Its drill instructions have long been obsolete, but its provisions for the discipline and welfare of the men and its instructions to their leaders are still worth reading—and will remain so as long as men at war must be led by other men.

In this book, Steuben gleaned from the military lore of the ages the prime essentials of military experience and wisdom and adapted them with marvelous tact and exactness to the needs of the young American Army. Insofar as the Continental Army influenced our national history, this book must be regarded as one of the most influential books ever published in America. Nor was its influence solely military. In knitting thirteen discordant state contingents into a homogeneous national army, it gave the first effective model of future political union. As its first edition was bound in blue, it was known to the army as "The Blue Book." According to North, "except the Bible it was held in the highest estimation."

4

On April 16, Congress resolved that the Baron's assistants should receive extra compensation for their services in preparing the Blue Book. Fleury was allowed $1,000, Walker, $600, L'Enfant, $500 and Duponceau, $400. By the same resolution, Steuben was granted $4,000 for his expenses. This last provision was strongly opposed in Congress. A letter from former President Laurens to his son John gives us a glimpse behind the scenes:

> Our friend Baron Stüben intimated expectations of pretty large pecuniary compensation, for his expences coming to and in America over and above the pay of Major General, and also for his own expences and those of M'r Fleury, Mr. L'Enfant and M'r Duponceau. A report was thereupon introduced from the Board of War. The whole seemed to me to be incongruous with his propositions at his arrival in York Town. I was therefore induced to call for certain documents and Papers relative to the subject in order to enlighten such of our Members as would otherwise have been ignorant, but I made no opposition to the Report. Some busy Body must have taken advantage of my conduct and misrepresented me to the Baron, otherwise the following dialogue three days ago when he dined with me could never have happened.
>
> "What is the reason Mr. Laurens that Congress will not allow me my expences. I told them I was not Rich and I am sure the Committee at York Town promised me."
>
> "Why Baron, I cannot answer for the conduct of Congress.

For my own part I would recommend to you not to press that subject at the present moment. Every Member of Congress is sensible of your merit and deserving. I cannot just now so fully assign reasons, as I may at a future time, but if I were to advise, you would delay your demands until our affairs shall be a little better arranged."

His declarations to me at York Town were that he would expect nothing till the end of the War, his running expences excepted—Congress gave him two or four Horses and a commission of Major General, paid all his Expences at and travelling from Boston to York Town etc. etc.

"Well," replied the Baron, "for myself I will take your advice. I will ask nothing yet. I will go to the Army and proceed in my duty—but why will they not do something for Fleury and the other young Gentlemen who have assisted in my work?"

"Congress Sir, will undoubtedly do everything that is just and reasonable. There is no Man who has a greater esteem and affection for Colo. Fleury than I have. But let us consider a little, Baron. Is not M'r Fleury now within one grade of Generalship. How long must he have served in his own country before he would have arrived at this eminence, with large and honorable testimonials in his pocket?"

"But my dear Mr. Laurens, Mr. President, he cannot live by his appointment, and he must go home if you do not do something for him."

"You very well know Baron, the state of our Army and the state of our finances—if the case be so, that Colo. Fleury cannot stay with us unless Congress will do something more for him and that Congress cannot do anything more for him, the consequence will be that he must go home. I shall be very sorry for it."

The Baron, in no small shew of Choler and rage, although in presence of 4 or 5 other guests, answered, "Then, I will go home. I will not stay."

"O Baron, Baron, you had just determined the contrary. Excuse me for saying, this is really taking advantage of my candor. You will make me more cautious hereafter if you persist in these sentiments. . . . I pray you, Baron, think better of this matter."

We went to dinner. The Baron looked grave. I made attempts

> to raise him. He retired earlier than usual, and if I do not mistake with a consciousness of a little transgression. . . .
>
> When Baron Stüben first addressed Congress he produced a Letter from Mr. Deane announcing him Lieutenant General and Quarter Master General in the King of Prussia's Army, hence I was led to give him the Title of Excellency, in my early correspondence; sometime after he went to camp at Valley forge, I was well informed that he had never advanced near the Rank of Lieutenant General. The Baron did not say to me that he had, but he did not disown it. Mr. Deane intimated that at some former time, he had seen his Commissions, but that when he was about to leave Paris in order to embark for America he was not possessed of them, having left them in Germany. . . . Neither duty nor inclination could possibly have misled me to upbraid a Man with whom I wished to have continued in friendship. But the times are distempered and the Devils of avarice and ambition are indefatigably improving them to their own advantage.[5]

Leaving Duponceau in Philadelphia to press the publication of his book, Steuben now prepared to return to the army. He had had a pleasant winter in the city and had made many friends. He became especially intimate with Richard Peters and his charming lady. With his staff officers, he spent many of his leisure hours at Belmont, their beautiful home overlooking the city. The Baron was devoted to their little boy. In a letter to Duponceau, a little later, he wrote: "Go to Mr. Peters' house and give three kisses to my little aide-de-camp and as many to his mother if Mr. Peters offers no objection."[6]

CHAPTER XXIX

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

1

STEUBEN rejoined the army at Middlebrook, New Jersey, on April 27. A few days later he was ordered to parade four battalions of picked men in honor of the French minister, Gérard, who paid an official visit to Washington at that time. Among Washington's guests was Señor Miralles, the Spanish agent to the United States. Miralles wrote a friend:

> At the end of this function and ride, we passed with the other guests to the lodging of Baron de Steuben, inspector general of the army, who entertained us in a banquet which was served in a tent erected for that purpose.[1]

In his letter to Chancellor Frank, the Baron embroiders his own account of Gérard's visit:

> During my stay in Philadelphia, I became very intimate with M. Gérard, the French minister. . . . He honored me with a visit in the camp, where he came expressly for that purpose. He was received with all the honors of an ambassador. On the day after his arrival, I ordered a maneuver with eight regiments of infantry. After this military display, he, in company with the commander in chief, and all the other generals and colonels, more than sixty persons, partook of a dinner in my quarters.[2]

The Baron had been on friendly terms with Gérard for some time. In one of his autobiographical sketches he says:

> On my arrival in Philadelphia, I found there M. Gérard as Minister of France. He received me with courtesy and friendship. . . . I was, however, a little surprised not to receive from him a single line either from M. de St. Germain or the Prince de Montbarré in reply to several which I had written them from this country. A little later M. de St. Germain left the Ministry and died.[3]

This silence of the French Ministry was most disturbing. It threatened the Baron's dream of future rewards from the French Government. Now that there was a formal alliance, His Most Christian Majesty no longer needed secret agents in America. Vergennes had been careful not to commit his promises to writing. And now, St. Germain, the Baron's only friendly witness to the verbal understanding, was dead.

But Beaumarchais had not forgotten the Baron. He wrote to De Francy:

> Recall me often to the memory and good wishes of Baron de Steuben. I congratulate myself, from what he tells me, on having given so great an officer to my friends, the freemen, and having in a certain way forced him to follow this noble career. I am in no way uneasy about the money I lent him to start with. Never did I make so agreeable a use of capital, for I have put a man of honor in his true place. I hear that he is inspector general of all the American troops. Bravo! Tell him that his glory is the interest of my money, and that I do not doubt that on those terms he will pay me with usury.[4]

About this time young Captain William North became one of Steuben's aides-de-camp. This proved to be one of the happiest incidents in the Baron's life. Ben Walker and Billy North now came together as the principal members of his military family.* There is a relation between an old general and an ideal aide-de-camp that is closer than the relation between father and son. The bond is a voluntary one and can endure only when there is perfect sympathy and understanding between the two parties. When this rare bond is once formed it is one of the closest and tenderest ties in all human relations. No son can know his father so intimately as such an aid knows his general. No father would dare to reveal himself so completely to his son as the old general reveals himself to a trusted aid. Walker and North retained this relationship to the Baron after the war and to the end of his life. And they were devoted friends to each other. In his last will he made them his "adopted children" and his heirs.

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* Walker was twenty-six years old this year. North was twenty-four.

2

AFTER the French minister's visit, Washington ordered the Baron to make a special inspection of the army:

> He [the inspector general] will see that an uniform organization takes place forthwith in the several regiments and whenever he perceives a regiment so far reduced as not to be able to turn out under arms the number prescribed for forming a Battalion, he is to report the same to the Commander in Chief, that the necessary arrangements may be made accordingly.

Steuben's report on the Virginia Line[5] will illustrate the problem that confronted him. This division comprised thirteen battalions and should have had an enlisted strength of 6,786. The inspection disclosed less than a third of that number present, though most of the year's recruits had arrived. The average strength of the battalions was less than one hundred and sixty.* Steuben therefore recommended that the Virginia Continentals should be reformed into six line battalions. After completing his inspections of the whole main army, he recommended that its thirty-six remaining battalions should be reformed into twenty-nine effective units. This arbitrary merging of organizations was bad for *esprit de corps* and had many administrative disadvantages; but as it was the only possible means of securing battalions fit for maneuver and combat, Washington approved it.

Washington also charged Steuben with the organization and training of a force of light infantry to be composed of picked officers and soldiers detailed from the several line battalions. The Baron was familiar with the light troops known as Chasseurs in France and Jäger in Germany. He therefore understood their uses in operations on the front and flanks of an army and for other special tactical missions. Under Washington's orders he now formed and supervised the training of a light infantry brigade. Colonel Fleury, the Baron's assistant in writing the Blue Book, was given one of its battalions. Later, Anthony Wayne became the brigade commander.[6]

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* The inspection disclosed the Virginia Line as more defective in organization and equipment than any other state contingent in the main army.

3

IN Thacher's *Military Journal* we have an eye-witness account of one of the Baron's inspections:

> *May 28, 1779.* The Baron Steuben reviewed and inspected our brigade. The troops were paraded in a single line. . . . The Baron first reviewed the line in this position, passing in front with a scrutinizing eye, after which he took into his hand the muskets and accoutrements of every soldier, examining them with particular accuracy and precision, applauding or condemning, according to the condition in which he found them. He . . . inquired also into the conduct of the officers towards their men, censuring every fault and applauding every meritorious action. Next he required of me, as surgeon, a list of the sick, with a particular statement of their accommodations and mode of treatment, and even visited some of the sick in their cabins. . . . He appears to be about fifty years of age, and is venerable and dignified in his deportment, rich and elegant in dress, having a splendid medal of gold and diamonds designating the order of *fidelity,* suspended at his breast. He is held in universal respect, and considered as a valuable acquisition to our country. . . .

North describes the regular monthly inspections:

> I have seen the Baron and his assistants seven long hours inspecting a brigade of three small regiments. Every man not present must be accounted for: if in camp, sick or well they were produced or visited: every musket handled and searched, cartridge boxes opened, even the flints and cartridges counted: knapsacks unstrung, and every article of clothing spread on the soldier's blanket, and tested by his little book,* whether what he had re-

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* In Steuben's system of property accounts, each soldier was given a personal account book to be carried in his knapsack. There was also a "Company Book" in which each captain's money and property accounts were kept up to date. At each monthly inspection, the soldiers' "little books" were checked against the "company book."

> ceived from the United States within the year was there, if not, to be accounted for. Hospitals, stores, laboratories, every place and every thing, was open to inspection and inspected, and what officer's mind was at ease if losses or expenditures could not, in the day of searching, be fully and fairly accounted for? The inspections were every month, and wonderful was the effect, not only with regard to economy, but in creating a spirit of emulation between different corps. I have known the subalterns of a regiment appropriate one of their two rations to the bettering the appearance of their men.[7]

North tells us further in his brief biography of the Baron:

> He was as rough as the ocean in a storm, when great faults in discipline were committed, but if in the whirlwind of his passion, he had injured anyone, the redress was ample. . . . At a review at Morristown, a Lieut. Gibbons . . . was arrested on the spot . . . for a fault which, it appeared, another had committed. At a proper moment, the Commander of the regiment came forward and informed the Baron of Mr. Gibbons' innocence. . . . "Desire Lieut. Gibbons," said the Baron, "to come in front of the troops." "Sir," said he, "the fault which was committed, might, in the presence of an enemy, have been fatal. . . . Your Colonel tells me that you are blameless. I ask your pardon. Return to your command." . . . All this passed with his hat off, the rain pouring on his reverend head. Was there an officer, a soldier, who saw this unmoved by feelings of respect and affection? Not one, who had the feelings of a soldier.

We have one more glimpse of the Baron as an inspector, this time through the eyes of a recruit:

> On our arrival the recruits were drawn up to be inspected by the Baron de Steuben. Fearing that my undersize would induce him to reject me, I gradually gathered the dirt under my heals—and when he arrived opposite to me in the line he asked me several questions—and finally said, "perhaps you may do"—and at the same time putting the hilt of his sword under my chin, saying, "you must learn to hold up your head." The keen eye and fierce countenance of the Baron, together with the large star glittering on his breast, in some measure terrified me, and caused a trembling in my limbs.[8]

4

IN June, Washington moved his army to the Highlands, establishing his own headquarters at New Windsor, near West Point. By this time the Baron was greatly annoyed at prolonged delays in the publication of the Blue Book. Pickering and Peters had pleaded shortages of material and the lack of suitable workmen. Finally the Baron wrote to the president of Congress. His complaint was read in Congress on June 16 and was referred to the Board of War with curt instructions "to expedite" the issue of the regulations. Pickering and Peters were nettled at this action over their heads. Nor was their resentment soothed by the following from the Baron to Peters:

> . . . Altho' I give to the D——l, the Honorable Board of War, I still always except my dear Friends Messr's Peters and Pickering. I beg, my dear Sir, you will make a similar distinction between the Inspector General and Baron Steuben. You may d–mn the first as much as you please, but pray preserve your friendship to the latter. Yes, my dear Friend, the Board of War has hurt me considerably by the delay of the Regulations. Is it possible to employ only one book binder for a work of which the whole army at once are to have copies? But no more on this subject. . . . My respects to Mrs. Peters, and an hundred kisses to my Rake of an aid-de-camp. Repeat often my name to him that he may not forget me quite.[9]

To this Peters replied on June 19:

> . . . You tell me to make a distinction between the Baron Steuben and the Inspector General. I will make another distinction: I will distinguish between the Baron Steuben uninformed and the Baron Steuben acquainted with facts and difficulties. A third difference I observe and that is between the Baron Steuben in good humor and the same gentleman (zoonically) angry and fretted. You see how readily I observe your injunctions.[10]

5

ON July 4 Steuben wrote a long letter to his friend, Chancellor Frank. It begins with a complaint that he had received no reply to four earlier letters. We have already given several well-embroidered passages from this epistle. A few others follow:

> . . . My pay [after his arrival at Valley Forge] was fixed at 16,400 francs. . . . All the expenses of my table are provided for by a special agent. Congress has ordered twenty-two horses for my special use and for my guard, one captain of horse, two lieutenants and forty dragoons. . . . In all the skirmishes of the last and present campaign, I have been so successful that every soldier wishes to serve under my command.
>
> . . . Please hand the enclosed packet to the Most Excellent of Princes. . . . Before leaving Philadelphia, I gave orders to a certain Mr. Robert Morris to make a complete collection of all the trees in North America . . . and to send three or four of each to his . . . Highness.
>
> . . . To conclude with my plans, . . . after that [the end of the war] I shall settle my accounts with Congress. A continuance of my salary of 16,400 francs is assured me for life. Congress has promised me . . . estates in the best parts of Jersey and Pennsylvania. A considerable pension from the French Government, contingent upon a successful conclusion of the war, was awarded me before I left for America. . . . I can also count upon an especially good gratuity from each of the thirteen colonies. . . . When this is fulfilled, my friend, I shall see you in Europe.[11] . . .

There is a copy of Frank's reply to this letter in the archives at Hechingen. It gives Steuben affectionate greetings from the Prince and Princess of Hohenzollern and other old friends. It assures him of their regard and their pride in his American successes. Such a letter would have brought joy to his heart. But apparently it never reached him. Other letters indicate that his first friendly greetings from home came nearly a year later and from another friend.[12]

6

THAT was a summer of inactivity. Clinton was too weak to attack Washington's stronghold at West Point. Washington was too weak to attack Clinton in New York. The people were so war weary that an American victory became a political necessity. Public confidence must be restored by another miracle such as the crossing of the Delaware and capture of Trenton, Christmas night, 1776. This was accomplished on the night of July 15–16 when Anthony Wayne with a detachment of the new light infantry carried Stony Point without firing a shot. None of the English garrison escaped. This victory had little strategic value, but its moral effect was incalculable. The news thrilled the whole country and restored public confidence. Friend and foe learned anew, as they had first learned at Monmouth, that the ragged Continentals had become the peers of any soldiers in the world—their peers in skill and discipline as well as in patriotism and bravery.

The capture of Stony Point was indeed one of the most brilliant exploits in military history. Washington conceived the plan and selected Wayne to execute it. Wayne picked the troops and commanded them in person. Trained American infantry, headed by Colonel Fleury, carried it into effect. All these were entitled to the laurels they won. But all of them conceded that their skill, their discipline, their confidence in the bayonet, grew from seeds that were sown by Steuben at Valley Forge.

In the meantime, the inspector general was busy perfecting the discipline and equipment of the army. Says Duponceau:

> Our troops during this bloodless campaign frequently shifted their quarters and we of course followed. My labor during that time was anything but pleasant. The reports of the different corps and departments of the army, . . . containing the number of men, the quantity of provisions, clothing, arms, ammunition etc., were sent to Baron Steuben. . . . From these documents we had to make extracts, and to frame out of them general returns to be laid before the Commander in Chief. That was a tedious business. A more agreeable duty was that of attending the Baron on horseback when he went to inspect the troops. He was much beloved by the soldiers, though he was a strict disciplinarian, and passionate withal. But there was in him a fund of goodness, which displayed itself on many occasions, and which could even be read in his severe countenance, so that he was extremely popular. . . . The

> Marquis de Lafayette and Baron De Steuben were great favorites with the Army, and were called by no other names. A woman went once to the latter to ask permission to name her child after him. "How will you call him?" said Steuben. "Why, to be sure," replied she, "I'll call him Baron."[13]

In the generation after the war, many American children bore such names as Marquis L. Smith and Baron S. Jones. One of these American "Barons" became a distinguished Baptist clergyman, and is well known in the annals of his church as the Reverend Baron Steuben Stow.

7

WHEN Washington ordered the Baron to inspect Gates's troops in Rhode Island, he found that his inspector general had no money for travel expenses. His monthly pay and allowances amounted to $250. But this whole sum was now worth less than $15 in real money. Even a thriftier man than the Baron could save little from such an income. As the journey was necessary in the public service Washington financed it by drawing a warrant on the Treasury. Since he had made this and earlier advances without authority, he reported the facts to Congress and requested a suitable provision for the future. The matter was debated in Congress but no effective action was taken. In the meantime the inspector general kept going by living on his rations and borrowing from his friends.

After completing his inspection of Gates's troops, Steuben returned to headquarters. On his return journey he acted as escort to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, the new French minister, who had just arrived in Boston. When the Baron first met Luzerne, he expected to receive some token of recognition from the French Government. But in this he was disappointed. As he wrote later:

> . . . I saw that he knew nothing of me, and that the French Ministry had not informed him how it happened that I came to this country. This convinced me that they had set me adrift and that I was to manage for myself as well as I could.[14] . . .

Years later, Richard Peters related an incident that may have occurred on this inspection journey. As the Baron was approaching a New England college town, he recalled that this same college had recently made Lafayette a Doctor of Laws. The old Prussian warrior considered it derogatory to the military character for a soldier to be dubbed "Doctor." So he halted his dragoon escort on the outskirts of the town and addressed it: "You shall spur de horse vel and ride troo de town like de debbil, for if dey catch you dey make one doctor of you."[15]

8

LUZERNE spent several days as Washington's guest at West Point. He brought the good news that Rochambeau was coming to America with a French Army next spring. After the minister left for Philadelphia, Washington commenced his preparations for next year's campaign. If Congress would give him an effective army to coöperate with Rochambeau, the campaign of 1780 should bring decisive victory. But how many recruits would be needed to fill the ranks? How many should come from each state? What arms, equipment and supplies would be required? As there was no War Department to answer such questions, the inspector general must get the necessary preliminary information direct from the troops. This involved strenuous special inspections of the regiments and their records.

Steuben pressed this inquiry with his usual thoroughness and dispatch. The results were even more discouraging than Washington anticipated. The authorized enlisted strength of the Continental Army was about 38,000. The number of men actually enrolled was only 27,000 and, of these, many were absent from sickness and other causes. Of the 27,000 on the rolls only 15,000 were enlisted for more than one year. By the first of next May there would be only 19,000 men on the rolls, with a much smaller number actually present and fit for duty. The army would thus comprise an unpredictable number of veterans and an unpredictable number of raw recruits. With such uncertain resources it would be impossible to make plans for effective coöperation with the French.

Having secured the facts from the inspector general, Washington proposed the only effective solution. This he submitted to Congress on November 18. Instead of waiting for an uncertain number of volunteers, he proposed that each state should draft enough men to fill its battalions and send them to the army by January 1. This would give time to train the recruits during the winter. In this way, and in this way only, would it be possible to take the field next spring with an effective army.

About this time British troops were sent from New York to South Carolina. Washington therefore ordered the Virginia Line to march southward to reënforce General Lincoln at Charleston. He then placed the remainder of his army in winter quarters in and near Morristown, New Jersey. There the Baron established his office early in December.

CHAPTER XXX

THE BARON AS A LOBBYIST

1

THE army suffered more that winter at Morristown than it did at Valley Forge. The men had not been paid for five months. The depreciation of the currency made it impossible to purchase food and other supplies. Steuben's report on the New York Brigade gives a picture of the state of the troops in December: "At the inspection, they exhibited the most shocking picture of misery I have ever seen, scarce a man having wherewithal to cover his nakedness in this severe season and a great number very bad with the Itch."[1]

In the meantime the general military situation was almost hopeless. The strength of the army had declined even more than Steuben had predicted. Congress had disregarded Washington's plan to fill the ranks by January 1. It had ordered no compulsory draft and had not even taken steps to provide for voluntary enlistments. The quotas for the year had not yet been fixed, and until that should be done, the several states could not begin recruiting. The whole situation was complicated by the collapse of the finances. Many men were willing to enlist without prospect of pay. But who could be expected to serve without rations or clothing or blankets?

2

IT is difficult for Americans of our generation to understand the political and economic weakness of the American Government at that time. There were enough men and enough wealth in the country to maintain an effective army of 40,000 men. There were ample resources but the political machinery for utilizing them was unorganized. Why was this so? Were the statesmen of that day unable to contrive effective measures, or were they unwilling to do so?

John Marshall gives us an answer to these questions. He was a captain in the Virginia Line at that time. Later, in his *Life of Washington*, he wrote:

> The efforts of General Washington to obtain a permanent military force, or its best substitute, a regular system for filling vacant ranks with draughts . . . were still continued. Notwithstanding the embarrassments with which Congress was surrounded, it is not easy to find adequate reasons for the neglect of representations so interesting, and of recommendations apparently so essential to the safety of the United States.
>
> Private letters disclose the fact that two parties still agitated Congress. One entered freely into the views of the Commander in Chief. The other, jealous of the army, and apprehensive of its hostility to liberty when peace should be restored, remained unwilling to give stability to its constitution by increasing the number who were to serve during the war. They seemed to dread the danger from the enemy to which its fluctuations would expose them, less than the danger which might be apprehended for the civil authority from its permanent character. . . .

It is difficult to conceive how any group of men could have harbored such unworthy suspicions. But we should judge them in the light of their own day. They were Englishmen and, like most Englishmen, they were strongly influenced by precedent. There was only one English precedent pertinent to this situation, but that one was most impressive. Their ancestors had resisted King Charles as they were now resisting King George. Parliament had defeated Charles by giving Cromwell an efficient army such as Washington was now seeking. As a result, one tyranny was replaced by a more powerful and a more odious tyranny. Before he was tempted by opportunity, Cromwell had been a simple country gentleman, from Huntingtonshire, as modest and unassuming as this country gentleman from the Potomac. Ever since the Restoration, English statesmen, both Whig and Tory, dreaded the power of the sword, and after the Revolution of 1689 they refused to maintain an army for more than two years at a time. The party described by Marshall sought to improve upon this English precedent. They would throttle their own army at the end of each year's campaign. Theirs was a delicate problem in equilibrium. They would make their army just strong enough to defeat King George, but not strong enough to establish a Cromwelliad after the victory. This party was never a majority in Congress, but from the beginning of the war it had been strong enough to thwart all proposals for effective military organization. In 1775, it had persuaded Congress to enlist the soldiers of the new Continental Army for one year at a time. This, according to Washington, was the sole cause for a prolonged war with all of its attendant social and economic distresses.[2] But for this, the war should have ended in decisive American victory before the winter at Valley Forge; before the collapse of public credit and before the resultant depreciation of the currency.

3

IN view of the situation in Congress, all plans for the next campaign and for coöperation with the French were at a halt. It was impossible for Washington to leave headquarters. The situation was too tangled and the emergency too pressing for him to transact his business by correspondence. He therefore decided to send Steuben to Philadelphia to act as his plenipotentiary with Congress. By this time he had grown to trust the Baron implicitly. He had full confidence in his loyalty and integrity as well as in his military wisdom. Therefore on January 18 Steuben left camp with the following credentials from the commander in chief to the president of Congress:

> Major General Baron de Steuben . . . will do me the honor of presenting this letter to Your Excellency. From this gentleman's perfect knowledge of service in general and of the state of our army in particular he has it entirely in his power to satisfy Congress in any inquiries they may think proper to make with respect to its situation, necessities and wants. The Baron, if it should be their pleasure to honor him with a personal conference, will fully explain to them the numerous evils and unavoidable embarrass-

ments that must attend our opening the Campaign before we are prepared and properly arranged for it, and how very far we are from being in this situation at present. . . .

4

WHEN Steuben arrived in Philadelphia all military legislation was held up by an ill-advised plan to reorganize the army. There were eighty regiments in the several state lines and a few others formed from the United States "at large." It was impossible to maintain so many regiments, even at half strength, under the voluntary system; and the compulsory draft recommended by Washington was politically impossible. It was therefore proposed to form an entirely new army by merging the regiments. If it was impossible to find recruits for more than forty effective battalions, why not make a new organization on that basis? This would save a great deal of money. Half of the officers could be dropped from the pay rolls and all other overhead expense could be cut in the same proportion. This proposed measure was known as the "incorporation of regiments."

Shortly after his arrival the Baron was invited by the Board of War to submit his views for the information of Congress. He complied on January 28[3] in a voluminous memorial in which he discussed the military situation in general and the reorganization scheme in particular. He conceded the theoretical advantages of the proposed "incorporation," but opposed it on practical grounds. In the first place, to reduce the number of regiments would advertise to the enemy that the United States could no longer maintain its army. In the second place, it would be unjust to hundreds of faithful officers to deprive them summarily of their pay and rank after years of sacrifice and gallant service. And finally, the new campaign should open in a few weeks. This would give no time for the careful and exhaustive studies that should precede a complete reorganization.

Steuben therefore proposed that reorganization should be postponed until next autumn and that the simplest possible measures should be taken, at once, to provide troops for the approaching campaign. A minimum of 30,000 men would be required. This would give 20,000 for the Northern army, 8,000 for the Southern army and a small surplus for special garrisons. In order to accomplish this as promptly as possible, he proposed to retain the existing organization, but with each battalion at just enough strength to give thirty-six men to each company of infantry. These companies would be very small, but the existing organization would remain intact and would form a framework for the immediate reception of recruits.

In his memorial, the Baron also considered the problem of supply, proposing the prompt establishment of magazines. In conclusion he wrote:

> We are already at the end of January. If the recruits have not joined the regiments by the 1st of April, the expense and trouble of assembling them shall avail nothing.
>
> If the magazines are not supplied for seven months against the harvest, the army is lost. . . .
>
> I make no doubt of a vigorous campaign . . . in Europe. I doubt still less of our allies assisting us efficaciously on this continent. It would be unhappy if we could do nothing on our Side at such favorable instants. . . .
>
> I cannot forbear observing here that most of the individuals of this Continent are tired of the present war. I wish this consideration may induce us to do our utmost efforts to bring it to a happy termination in one glorious campaign.

5

STEUBEN's argument for immediate action was not accepted by Congress at once. There was still a strong sentiment in favor of the incorporation of regiments. Fortunately, it was decided to separate the question of authorized strength from the question of permanent organization. Congress was therefore able, on February 9, to pass a resolution fixing the establishment for the current year at about 35,000 men. The Baron now hoped that recruiting could begin at once. But in this he was disappointed. The resolution fixed the total number of men to be furnished by each state, but it prescribed that each state should first be credited with the number of its men now in the service who would not be entitled to discharge prior to September 30. The commander in chief was therefore directed to furnish each of the thirteen governors with complete returns of all the troops from his state. Until he received this return, it would be impossible for any governor to determine the number of recruits he was expected to furnish.

Two weeks after the passage of the resolution, Steuben wrote to Washington:

> The delay which must result from procuring the returns . . . is a difficulty I apprehended as soon as I saw the Resolution of Congress. . . . We shall certainly lose two months when we ought not to lose two days. . . .
>
> The number of men we can have next Campaign . . . ought to determine the quantity of arms, ammunition, etc., we shall want; but the uncertainty of the former throws obscurity over all the rest. . . . I should likewise be happy if I could assure you that we shall also be able to pay and provide for our Army. Congress are now endeavoring to settle these matters. God grant that they may succeed. . . .

On February 23 the Baron wrote to Ben Walker:

> . . . Behold! My dear friend, there is a letter on my table for the Honorable Congress, which has been sealed for a week. It contains my resignation from the office with which America has honored me.
>
> The bad state of my private finances compels me to quit a game which I can no longer play. They have persuaded me to hold this letter yet a few days with the assurance Congress is occupied with the means of relieving me. I don't know what will happen. I shall wait a few days, but my letter once submitted, I engage you my word of honor that I shall not withdraw it.[4] . . .

The Baron's threat of resignation again brought his personal affairs to the attention of Congress. He had been in financial distress for months. His whole month's pay in Continental money was now worth less than $9 in specie. On February 25, Congress directed the Board of War to confer with him. Three days later the Board recommended that he be allowed 250 louis d'or to reimburse him for expenses incurred in coming to America and 546 louis d'or for future expenses, both sums to be paid to him in bills of exchange. After consideration by a special committee, this recommendation was adopted by Congress on March 7. This was a great relief to the Baron, but he soon encountered a new difficulty. When he cashed the bill for 250 louis, he had to pay 40 per cent discount. To protect him from more serious loss on the larger bill, Congress directed that it be paid in Continental money at the current rate.[5] Thereupon, the Baron drew $50,000 (about $180 in real money) "on account" in order "to purchase necessaries for the ensuing campaign."

On March 15 the Baron wrote to Washington:

> . . . I have not in the least advanced in the affairs which I had proposed to be brought to a conclusion. Before it is known whether the number of regiments is to be preserved, or whether any incorporation is to take place, it is impossible to make any calculation for the formation [of the army].
>
> I have exerted all the means in my power to persuade Congress to determine that important question and to adopt any system, that Your Excellency and the Chiefs of the several departments might make their arrangements in consequence; but it seems that the ill state of our finances has stopped all the wheels of the whole machine . . .
>
> The month of March is more than half spent and I shudder, my dear General, when I think of the many important arrangements that are still to be made between this time and the opening of the Campaign. . . . The day before yesterday I went to Mr. Livingston [Chairman of the Committee on Army Organization] and I declared to him that I was ready to set off for the army, seeing that my presence here was of no kind of use. He requested me to defer my departure and to communicate my opinion to the Board of War of the formation of the army for next Campaign . . .

At Mr. Livingston's request the Baron drew up another long memorandum on the state of the army.[6] Again he pointed out that the "incorporation" of the regiments and all other radical changes in organization should be postponed until after the year's campaign. The only practical solution was to retain the existing regiments and to provide them with recruits as speedily as possible. But still Congress dallied and debated. It could not decide on the details of its proposed reorganization and it would not decide to postpone it. In the meantime all plans for military operations remained unsettled and in confusion.

On the twenty-eighth, Steuben wrote to Washington that Congress had finally decided to postpone further consideration of army reorganization until December 1. In the course of his letter he said:

> I observed to you, my dear General, in my last, that every wheel of the machine seemed stopped. Of the truth of this observation I become more and more convinced and must confess that to me our situation appears very critical. . . . You will perhaps think, my dear General, that I am in anxiety for things which are out of my sphere; but when you consider that all my happiness depends on our success, you will not blame me for the interest I take in the cause. . . .

To this Washington replied:

> My sentiments concerning public affairs correspond too much with yours. The prospect, my dear Baron, is gloomy and the storm threatens. Not to have the anxieties you express, at the present juncture, would be not to feel that zeal and interest in our cause by which all your conduct shows you to be actuated. But I hope we shall extricate ourselves, and bring everything to a prosperous issue. I have been so inured to difficulties in the course of this contest, that I have learned to look upon them with more tranquility than formerly. Those which now present themselves, no doubt, require vigorous exertions to overcome them and I am far from despairing of doing it. . . .

The tone of this letter shows that, by this time, Steuben had won a place in Washington's affections as well as in his respect and esteem. His letters are no longer formal military documents. The "My dear Sir" of the earlier correspondence has now become "My dear Baron."

Though the question of permanent organization had been postponed, there were still many important decisions to be made with reference to the pending campaign. The Baron therefore recommended that a special committee be appointed to confer with the commander in chief at Morristown. As he wrote to Washington on April 6:

> Under such Circumstances of Delay, there appeared to be but one way of having anything done for the Army in any Season; this was the appointment of a Committee, with full powers, in concert with Your Excellency, to make every arrangement necessary for the next Campaign.

When this committee was finally appointed about a week later, the military situation had become most critical. Washington's whole Northern army, on both sides of the Hudson, had shrunk to less than 11,000 men. Of these, more than 2,000 would be discharged within the month. Small as this force was, it was necessary to send the Maryland division to South Carolina, where General Lincoln was confronted by superior British forces.

CHAPTER XXXI

A CAMPAIGN OF IFS

1

WHEN Steuben returned to the army at Morristown about the middle of April he found the regiments even more depleted than they were a year before. As late as May 18, Colonel William Davies, one of his subinspectors, reported that there were barely enough men at West Point for routine fatigue duty. "It is to be hoped," he wrote, "that we shall have recruits soon, so that we may again resume the employment of soldiers."[1]

But Washington was so far from being discouraged that he was planning a decisive campaign. Lafayette had returned from France with the news that Rochambeau with about 6,000 men would soon arrive on our coast. A second detachment of about the same strength would soon follow. Washington therefore made new efforts to stimulate Congress. He urged the governors to hasten the procurement of men and supplies. He reminded his weary and reluctant countrymen that it would be shameful if America should fail to support her allies. Early in June, he directed Steuben and each of his other generals to submit a plan for an attack on New York. There was no suggestion of purely defensive action. If too weak to attack New York, he would assume the offensive in Canada or the Carolinas. This was characteristic of his military genius and his unconquerable spirit. If he was ever a Fabius it was only because he was forced to a Fabian policy by lack of resources.

His resources at this time were not imposing. His own army in New Jersey numbered less than 4,000 men. These might be reënforced to 7,000 by denuding the forts in the Highlands. His soldiers were unpaid and half clad and two regiments had recently mutinied because they were tired of half rations. The British garrison in New York numbered 14,000 men with a prospect of reënforcement from South Carolina. Steuben calculated that to take such a place with such a garrison would require naval superiority and a well-appointed army of 40,000 men. And yet Washington with 7,000 ill-equipped Continentals and no fleet at all was planning that very enterprise. He did not have the means of offensive action, but IF by the grace of God he should have them before the end of the summer, how should he use them?

In fact, his plan was a plan of IFs.

IF Rochambeau should arrive with 6,000 men;

IF a second French detachment of the same strength should come a little later;

IF the French fleet should gain temporary command of the sea off the American coast;

IF the states should finally wake up and send their long-delayed recruits;

IF Congress should finally find enough money or credit to procure necessary supplies;

IF the French should bring enough arms and ammunition and clothing to make up the American shortage;

IF all of these things should concur, how should he employ his resources? What should he do now and during the summer to be ready for such a contingency? These were the questions that Washington put to his generals. Their answers, including the Baron's, may be read in the Washington Papers.

Washington knew that most of the factors of success lay in the lap of the gods. But he believed that the gods help those who help themselves. He must therefore do his part to be ready if the gods should smile. His depleted regiments must be formed into effective battalions; the army must make up in skill and discipline for its weakness in numbers; arrangements must be made for the prompt reception and training of recruits, should they ever come; supplies must be accumulated; defective weapons and equipment must be collected and repaired. Thanks to Steuben's staff work these preparations were already well under way in the main army. Washington therefore decided to send him to West Point to press forward the same activity among the troops in the Highlands.

2

On June 7, when the Baron was about to start northward, he was suddenly placed in command of troops. News had come that Knyphausen with 5,000 men was invading New Jersey. He had crossed over from Staten Island to Elizabethtown during the night and was now marching on Morristown. Washington set out to meet him at once. He gave his right wing to Greene, his left wing to Lafayette and his second line to Steuben. Knyphausen had hoped to take the Americans by surprise, but by nightfall he had marched only seven miles. The Jersey militia, firing from every covert, had opposed him all day. He finally halted on the outskirts of Springfield. By that time Washington's army had come up and was strongly posted in the hills northwest of the town. Washington determined to attack at dawn while his militia allies were still with him. The Baron was delighted. At last he would command American troops in battle. But Knyphausen evaded the issue. During the night he slipped away and marched back to Elizabethtown where he took up a strong position covering his bridge of boats.

Washington held his position with the New Jersey militia between him and Knyphausen. He gave Steuben command of all the advanced troops. On the eleventh, he ordered: "All reports from the advanced posts are to be sent in the first instance to the Baron's quarters, and all deserters, prisoners and every kind of intelligence from the enemy are to be sent to the same place." The military situation was puzzling. Washington knew that Clinton had recently captured Charleston, South Carolina, and would soon be back in New York with a strong body of troops. Knyphausen might be making a feint against Morristown in order to cover Clinton's advance on West Point. Or Clinton might reënforce Knyphausen and advance on Morristown with overwhelming force.

By the twentieth the situation appeared to be clear. Both

Washington and Steuben were now convinced that Knyphausen was making a feint and that Clinton's real objective was West Point. There was no longer any probability of a battle in New Jersey. The Baron was therefore ordered to resume his original mission in the Highlands. A little later, the main army took up its march toward West Point. Greene was left with a small detachment to observe the hostile bridgehead at Elizabethtown. This gave Clinton the opportunity he sought. On the twenty-third he reënforced Knyphausen and advanced in force. With Washington away on a false scent, here was a chance to overwhelm Greene and destroy the magazines at Morristown. Fortunately, Washington was still in supporting distance and marched back to Springfield in time. There Greene won new distinction by holding a superior enemy until Washington came to his support.

So the Baron missed a chance of martial glory. Had he remained in command of troops just two days longer, he might have reaped, or at least shared, the laurels that Greene won at Springfield. But one feature of Steuben's brief tenure of command is significant. The brigadiers no longer resented his assignment to active command.

3

WHEN Steuben reached West Point he found many problems requiring immediate solution. Whatever Washington's plan might be, West Point would remain the strategic key to the whole campaign. No theater of war was ever more decisively dominated by a fortress. It kept the British fleet in the lower Hudson, thus closing the door between the British in New York and the British in Canada. On the other hand, it kept open the doorway between New England and the other colonies. The military supplies for the campaign must be collected and stored under its protection. Here, all the recruits from New England must be assembled, equipped and trained. Here, also, Steuben found a delicate problem in the economy of military forces.

There must be enough soldiers to man the defenses at West Point. But not a man should be kept at the fortress who could be spared for service with Washington's field army.

Washington knew that the Baron would find much to reform at West Point. But to put his reforms in effect promptly would be another matter. General Howe, the commander of the West Point district, was Steuben's senior in rank. He was a gallant soldier but his ability and energy were limited and he had had no training for the command of a great strategic fortress. The Baron, as inspector general, would inspect Howe's troops. He would report defects and make recommendations, but he would have no power to issue orders. How Washington solved this delicate problem is revealed in a confidential letter from Hamilton to Steuben:

> . . . As you are at West Point, the General wishes you to remain there. . . . He has confidence in your judgment, and wishes you to give your advice and assistance to the commanding officer. As you have no command in the post you can only do this in a private friendly way: but I dare say, General Howe will be happy to consult you. You will consider this a private letter in which I rather convey you the General's wishes than his commands.[2]

The Baron followed Hamilton's hint with tact and success. He advised General Howe in "a private friendly way," and Howe was "happy to consult" him. When the inspector general found anything wrong, he pointed it out confidentially, to the commanding general, and advised him how to remedy it in such a way that the reform appeared to be made on Howe's own initiative. Thus, aided by the Baron's eye and brain, Howe suddenly became an able fortress commander.

In a letter on July 14, the Baron reported progress to Washington. There were only 3,000 veterans in the Highland command and these were largely absorbed in wasteful routine duties. Here Howe was able to make a drastic reform. The Baron showed him how to reduce the routine details by two thirds without impairing the service. This released 2,000 veterans for active military duty. These resumed their long neglected drills under the supervision of the Baron's subinspectors.

By this time the long-delayed recruits from the New England states had begun to come in and here another reform was necessary. Howe's veterans welcomed these recruits, as old soldiers are prone to welcome "rookies," by giving them the more disagreeable and burdensome forms of fatigue duty. When the Baron reported this evil and suggested a remedy, Howe ordered that the recruits should devote all of their available time to drill. No man was to be available for special duty until he had become an effective soldier. In his letter of July 14, Steuben also inclosed his plan for a new organization of the light infantry. When Washington approved this a few days later, he charged the Baron with the organization and equipment of all the light companies and battalions to be formed from Howe's brigades.

4

TOWARD the end of July the troops at West Point joined the main army near Peekskill and the Baron was given the command of a division. During the month of August Washington kept his troops assembled awaiting an opportunity for decisive action. Rochambeau had arrived with 6,000 troops, convoyed by a naval force under the Chevalier de Ternay. This French reënforcement was now bottled up in Narragansett Bay by a superior English fleet. But a second expedition was expected from France to lift the blockade and raise Rochambeau's force to 12,000 men. In the meantime, Washington kept his troops in a constant state of readiness. Doctor Thacher gives us a glimpse of them at that time:

> The whole army, which occupies an extent of several miles can be put in motion, and take up a line of march in less than an hour. . . . Every man and every horse are taught to know their place and their duty. Marching orders, so soon as issued, are communicated to each brigade and regiment. The whole line of encampment resounds with martial music. All is bustle and activity, but

> free from confusion. The drums and fifes beating a march, the tents are instantly struck and thrown into wagons, the line of march commences, every subordinate officer and soldier follows his commander.[3]

A little later, Thacher writes in his journal:

> Dined with Baron Steuben, and spent the afternoon with the guests. The Baron keeps a splendid table and treats his visitors with polite attention. . . . Notwithstanding the scarcity of provisions in camp, the Baron's table continues to be well supplied; his generosity is unbounded.[4]

5

By September 6, even Washington conceded that there was no hope of decisive action that year. On that day he assembled Steuben and his other generals and gave them the military situation which may be summarized as follows:

1. Word had finally come that the second echelon of Rochambeau's expedition was blockaded at Brest by a superior British fleet. There would be no reënforcements from France this year.

2. Word had also come that Gates had been defeated by Cornwallis at Camden. The Continental troops from all the Southern states were shattered and dispersed. No more reenforcements could be spared from the Northern army. If there was to be further resistance in the South, a new Continental Army must be organized and equipped down there.

3. The state of the Northern army was not encouraging. The states had furnished only a third of the recruits that Congress called for. The enlistments for the current year would soon expire and Washington's army would be reduced to a total of 6,000 men by the first of January.

The Baron and the other generals complied with Washington's request for their opinions as to what could and should be done. It would be unprofitable to quote them in detail. They all agreed that the projected campaign against New York was out of the question for this year. Evidently the decisive campaign must again be postponed. There was nothing to be done except to hold the Highlands securely and hope for better fortune next year. But even this final objective was almost lost. On the night of September 25, Benedict Arnold sold West Point to the enemy. Fortunately his treason was discovered before he could deliver the fortress to Clinton.

6

THE Baron was a member of the court martial that tried Major André. He sympathized with the prisoner as a gallant officer and gentleman who had been forced by circumstances into a false position. His guilt was clear, however, and Steuben joined the other members in the sentence of death. But he abhorred the very name of Arnold. Not long after André's execution, while inspecting one of the Connecticut companies, he heard a soldier answer to the name of "Arnold." After the inspection he sent for Arnold, asked him how he could bear the name of a traitor and advised him to take another name. The soldier admitted that he hated the shameful surname but doubted whether he could change it. When the Baron assured him that the matter could be arranged, Private Arnold asked what name he should take. The Baron replied that he was welcome to "Steuben" if he cared to take it. The offer was gratefully accepted. Thereupon the inspector general arranged that "Jonathan Steuben" should replace "Jonathan Arnold" on the rolls of the Continental Army. In January, 1783, Jonathan Steuben memorialized the General Assembly of Connecticut:

> . . . That he is a sergeant in the Continental Army, and unfortunately bears the surname of the infamous Benedict Arnold, once a Major General in the armies of the United States, now a Traytor and deserter; that some time after the desertion of the said Benedict, the Honorable Major General Baron Steuben, pitying the misfortune of any person Friendly to the American cause doomed to bear the same name with a notorious Traytor, offered the memorialist Liberty to assume the name of Steuben . . . and en-

> gaged to your memorialist, on taking the said name of Steuben, to pay him the sum of Two Dollars per month, during the present war; . . . praying this assembly to permit him to assume the surname of Steuben and by that name to be hereafter known and called.

Whereupon it was duly

> Enacted, by the Governor, Council, and Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the said memorialist have Liberty, and Liberty is hereby granted him, to take upon himself the surname of Steuben instead of that of Arnold, and that the memorialist's surname be Steuben, and that by that name, in all legal proceedings, he be ever after known and called.

The Baron retained his interest in his name-son. After the war he helped Jonathan to educate his children. Years later, Jonathan settled with his family on a farm on the Baron's land grant in Oneida County, New York. His eldest son bore the name Frederick William Steuben. Two other descendants (whether sons or grandsons is uncertain) were named for Benjamin Walker and William North. William North Steuben named one of his sons "Baron De Steuben."[5]

7

FOR some time after Arnold's treason Steuben remained a division commander as well as inspector general. During this time he was also busy with the perennial problem of army organization. Early in October Washington received a resolution of Congress reducing the number of regiments and otherwise changing the organization of the Continental Army. In this case, however, Congress had the courtesy to ask for comments from the commander in chief. This gave Washington an opportunity to point out many defects in the proposed legislation and to insist upon some equitable provision for the officers who would become surplus. His reply to Congress on October 11 and other documents in the Washington Papers show, that as usual, Steuben gave him material assistance. In order to expedite the business and to avoid prolonged correspondence, Washington again sent the Baron to Philadelphia to act as his representative.

Congress acted favorably upon Washington's proposals. On the twenty-third Steuben wrote him:

> It is with greatest satisfaction, I acquaint you that the Plan of Arrangement, which your Excellency sent to Congress has been agreed to yesterday without any alteration. The granting of the half pay for life to the Reduced officers has met with some opposition, but the proposition has not only passed, but it was resolved immediately after to extend those advantages to all officers in the service.

But Steuben found a personal annoyance in Philadelphia. Congress had recently passed a resolution reorganizing the inspector general's department.[6] Under the old law, the Baron's assistants received additional pay ranging from $20 to $30 per month. Under the new law, though onerous new duties were prescribed, the additional pay was cut about 75 per cent. Steuben therefore wrote:

> I am not very happy in the Arrangement of my department. . . . The monthly addition of from 5 to 8 dollars to the pay of officers of such merit . . . appears to me so very mean, that I will not take upon myself to make them such a proposition. . . . I am therefore determined to Present a Memorial. . . . If Congress desires that I should continue in this office, I flatter myself that they will have a regard to my representation.

CHAPTER XXXII

SOUTHWARD WITH GREENE

1

ON October 23 Washington wrote Greene that he had selected him to replace Gates as commander of the Southern department. In the course of his letter he said:

> I also propose to send Baron De Steuben to the Southward with you. His talents, knowledge of the service, zeal and activity, will make him very useful to you in all respects, and particularly in the formation and regulation of the raw troops who will principally compose the Southern Army. . . .

On the same day he wrote to Steuben:

> Dear Baron: Though I am sensible how important your services would be in this quarter, yet, as to the Southward there is an army to be created, the mass of which is without any formation at all, . . . I have recommended it to Congress to send you with General Greene to the Southern Army. . . . Assure yourself that wherever you are, my best wishes for your happiness and success attend you. . . .

Washington's phrase, "an army to be created," was no mere figure of speech. The Continental troops from the Southern states had almost ceased to exist. The regiments from Georgia and the two Carolinas and most of the Virginia troops had become prisoners of war when Charleston surrendered. The Maryland Line and the remnant of the Virginians had been shattered in the battle of Camden. If Greene was to have an army, the Continental troops of the Southern states must be organized and trained anew.

Greene hastened to Philadelphia where Congress confirmed his appointment on October 30. He was delighted to have the Baron as his assistant. They had been close friends since their first meeting at Valley Forge. He not only knew Steuben's ability but had full confidence in his loyalty. With such a man to take over the details of organization and training, he would be free for the difficult strategic and political problems that confronted him. Greene remained in Philadelphia for several days. He wrote to Washington that he hoped to form a "flying army" of about 1,800 Continentals. But a study of the situation made it doubtful whether he could enlist even that small force. It was still more doubtful whether he could equip and supply it. The wagon train of the Southern army with most of its arms and equipment had been captured or destroyed at Camden. There was a great shortage of arms, ammunition and clothing. There was no money to buy them and no wagons to transport them, even if they could be procured.

If Congress was helpless, it did all it could to enable Greene to help himself. It placed all of the states south of Pennsylvania in the Southern department. It then called upon the authorities in these states, "To afford every necessary assistance and support in men, cloathing, money, arms, intrenching tools, provisions and other aids to Major General Greene who is hereby authorized to call for the same." Here Congress delegated all of its authority to its general. Its only power over the Sovereign States was the power of begging from them. It was something to cut the bonds of red tape so that Greene could do his begging direct.

The two generals left Philadelphia on November 3. On the twelfth they arrived at Mount Vernon where they were entertained by Mrs. Washington. From there Greene wrote to his chief: ". . . Mount Vernon is one of the pleasantest places I ever saw. . . . Baron Steuben is delighted with the place and charmed with the reception we met with." But while the Baron was charmed with Mistress Martha's hospitality, her mansion did not meet his taste. He confided to Duponceau: "If General Washington were not a better General than he was an architect, the affairs of America would be in a very bad condition."[1]

2

When Greene arrived in Richmond on November 16, he expected to make Virginia an effective base for the Southern army. Here he would find recruits for his little "flying army" of Continentals, and establish supply depots for his campaign against Cornwallis. But he was sorely disappointed. He found Virginia completely absorbed in her own defense. A British fleet had recently entered the Chesapeake and had landed 3,000 soldiers under General Leslie. Virginia having been thus invaded, General Muhlenberg, the local Continental commander, had been compelled to take the field. With about 4,000 militia and his Continental recruits, he checked Leslie's advance and confined him to Portsmouth and Norfolk. But all the arrangements he had made for reënforcing the Southern army were destroyed. The Continental recruits were in the field with the militia. His storehouses were empty. Most of the arms and accouterments he had collected for the Continentals had been borrowed by the state in order to equip her yeomanry.

This was the situation that confronted Greene. The governor, Thomas Jefferson, appreciated the importance of supporting the Southern army. But with an invader at the mouth of the James, Virginia had no resources to spare. The whole state was in panic. Public credit had collapsed. The expense of maintaining the militia in the field had brought the government to the verge of bankruptcy. Greene was greatly concerned by this crisis, but he could not linger in Richmond. His own task lay in the Carolinas. He therefore decided to leave Steuben in Virginia as the temporary Continental commander and his personal representative with the state authorities. This was a wise decision. The Baron understood Greene's needs and plans. He knew the political situation in Congress and the limited support that could be expected from that quarter. He enjoyed the full confidence of Washington and the Board of War. His genius for organization was well known and his professional prestige would appeal to the state authorities. After organizing an effective base in Virginia he would rejoin Greene and resume his original mission.

Before leaving Richmond on November 21 Greene did all he could to impress the state authorities with the supreme importance of reënforcing the Southern army. In a farewell letter to Jefferson he inclosed an estimate of his needs in men, money, arms and supplies.[2] He was greatly concerned to find that public sentiment was opposed to sending any military resources out of the state. He pointed out that the best defense of Virginia was to defeat Cornwallis, and that his own victory or defeat in the Carolinas would determine the fate of Virginia and of the whole American cause. Governor Jefferson recognized the soundness of this principle but he could not carry his people with him. There was strong resistance in the legislature. Why should Virginia sacrifice herself to defend the soil of other states? On the eve of his departure, Greene wrote to the Board of War, "The prospect was gloomy when I left Philadelphia, and I am obliged to add that it appears more so as I advance to the scene of action."[3]

3

STEUBEN took up the duties of his new office with his usual energy. He appointed Colonel William Davies to command the Continental base at Chesterfield Court House.* Davies had formerly served as one of his subinspectors and was an officer of exceptional ability and energy. The Baron charged him with the reconstitution and equipment of the Virginia Continentals and with the construction of hospitals, storehouses and additional barracks. He also charged him with the Continental recruiting service throughout the state.[4]

On November 25, Steuben wrote an optimistic letter to Washington. He would soon be able to send a substantial reënforcement to Greene. The enemy at Portsmouth had reëmbarked and sailed from the Chesapeake. This would release about 800 Continental recruits serving under Muhlenberg. General Lawson's

* About twelve miles west by south of Richmond.

state corps, about 500 strong, would also be available. With these troops and Light-Horse Harry Lee's Legion, just arrived from the North, he would soon be able to forward a detachment of 1,600 men to the Carolinas. But by the end of the month the prospect was not so encouraging. Muhlenberg's Continental recruits were but half clad when they took the field. Many of them had sickened from exposure. Others had escaped the hospital and the grave by deserting. When the remnant of them returned from the field they were literally naked. Until they could be reclothed they could not be sent to the army for a winter campaign. Davies had no clothing in his storehouses. There was but little cloth in the market and the state could give him no money to buy it or to employ tailors. There was also a serious shortage of military equipment. There had been great confusion and disorder in discharging the militia. The state authorities were slow in returning the Continental muskets they had borrowed and most of those returned were in bad order. As a result, Davies had few serviceable weapons in his arsenal and no money to pay for repairs. Lawson's special corps proved to be unavailable. His men had only a few more weeks to serve and as they refused to reënlist they were discharged.[5]

It was several weeks before Davies could find enough muskets and clothing for a detachment of 400 Continental recruits. These were formed into a battalion under Colonel Christopher Greene. On December 14 they marched southward with Light-Horse Harry and his Legion. Thus after strenuous exertion, the Baron was finally able to send 700 Continentals to Greene. Weak as it was, this reënforcement was relatively strong. At that time there were only 800 Continental soldiers fit for duty in the whole Southern army. When Light-Horse Harry and Kit Greene brought him 700 more, General Greene opened his campaign for the reconquest of South Carolina.

4

BY the end of December, the Baron's optimism was restored. The legislature had recently passed an enlistment law for the

Virginia Continentals.[6] It offered a bounty of $12,000 to each recruit who enlisted for the war. As Virginia paper money had little real value, a more substantial future reward was offered. At the end of the war each soldier would receive "a healthy-found-negro . . . or sixty pounds in gold or silver . . . and moreover be entitled to 300 acres of land." The law fixed the quota of Continental recruits for each county and provided that whenever there should be insufficient voluntary enlistments, the county lieutenant should draft enough men to make up the deficiency.

The legislature also authorized a new tax, payable in tobacco or hemp as well as in money. This encouraged Governor Jefferson to hope that he could now fill Greene's requisition. He assured the Baron that ample supply magazines would be established on the North Carolina border. In the meantime, the diligent Davies was beginning to collect a stock of arms and ammunition. The ordnance shop at Westham, seven miles up the river from Richmond, was beginning to repair muskets and manufacture cartridges. The shortage of clothing was still serious, but Davies had finally established a tailor shop at Chesterfield. The Baron was greatly encouraged. He would send another battalion of Continentals to Greene soon after New Year's and, thereafter, a similar battalion every two weeks. In a little while he would leave the Virginia base to Muhlenberg and Davies. Then he would join Greene and command troops in a glorious campaign against Cornwallis.

5

BUT the Baron was too experienced a soldier to make plans without reckoning on what the enemy might do to upset them. If the enemy should return to the Chesapeake, the flow of reenforcements to Greene would be stopped. All the military resources of Virginia would again be absorbed in local defense. It would be bad enough if the enemy should occupy Portsmouth as Leslie had done. But suppose he should sail up the broad estuary of the James before disembarking his troops! He could then choose a landing place near the mouth of the Appomattox within a day's march of Richmond or Petersburg or Chesterfield. As it would be impossible to predict his landing place or his objective, it would be impossible to determine where to assemble the militia in time to oppose him. He would thus be able to defeat the local forces in detail. He would then destroy the Continental base at Chesterfield and the storehouses at Richmond and Petersburg. With the upper James in the hands of the enemy, Greene would be doomed. He would be completely cut off from the North.

Soon after his arrival in Virginia the Baron found a solution for this critical strategic problem. About fourteen miles below the mouth of the Appomattox, the estuary narrows to a breadth of about eight hundred yards. On the south shore of this narrow strait, at a place called Hoods, there was a favorable site for artillery to command the channel. A small fort established here would change the whole situation. The enemy must take time to reduce this fort or he must land his troops below it—at least two days' march from Petersburg or Richmond. This would reveal his proposed objective in time to organize an effective resistance. The Baron directed Colonel Senf, an engineer by profession, to make working plans for the proposed fort. As there were suitable heavy cannon in the possession of the state with convenient water transportation; and as a blockhouse and simple earthworks would meet all requirements, the project was not difficult. Colonel Senf estimated that with a gang of fifty men, he would be able to finish the whole fort in less than two weeks.

Steuben submitted the Hoods project to the governor. Jefferson received it courteously but was not greatly impressed with it. He did not share the Baron's fear that hostile transports would ever ascend the James. They never had in the past and therefore never would. But he thanked the Baron for taking an interest in purely local affairs and submitted the proposal to the Assembly.[7] The Assembly took no action and the governor did not press it. As a matter of fact, Jefferson was absorbed in another military problem just at that time. He was not thinking of local defense. He was thinking of conquests in the Far West. He was busy fitting out a little army for George Rogers Clark to lead against the British at Detroit. He had no time or money to waste on fortifications at Hoods.

Though the legislature ignored his defense project, Steuben was very popular with its members at this time. At the end of the year they passed a law making liberal grants of land to all Virginia officers in the Continental Army. This statute also provided:

> As a testimony of the high sense the General Assembly of Virginia entertain of the important services rendered the United States by the honourable Major General Baron Steuben, it is further enacted, that fifteen thousand acres of land be granted to the said Major General Baron Steuben, in like manner as is herein granted to other Major Generals.[8]

Here the Old Dominion virtually accepted the Baron as an adopted son. Here, also, he found the first practical realization of his dream of wealth. The other twelve states would, of course, follow Virginia's example. He would have a princely fortune at the end of the war.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ARNOLD'S INVASION[1]

1

WHILE the Baron was completing his plans to reenforce Greene, Sir Harry Clinton had determined to upset them. On December 20, he sent a fleet from New York with 1,600 British soldiers under Benedict Arnold. Arnold had orders to break up the Continental base in Virginia and to coöperate with Cornwallis from a permanent post at Portsmouth. His ships were dispersed by a storm off the Virginia capes. But by Friday, December 29, he had reassembled most of them off Old Point Comfort. As Governor Jefferson, for reasons of economy, had abolished his patrol and courier service, it was not until Sunday, New Year's Eve, that he learned by "a private hand" that a fleet of "27 sail" had entered the mouth of the James.[2] Whether this fleet was English or French, the "private hand" neglected to say. The Governor passed the news to the Baron, who immediately gave preliminary orders for the removal of the Continental stores from Petersburg and Chesterfield. With his trained common sense he divined that the ships were English and would ascend the river. But he was unable to convince the governor. Jefferson's peculiar notions of military economy made him unwilling to incur the expense of calling out the militia until he could be sure just where it would be needed—and then, of course, it would be too late.

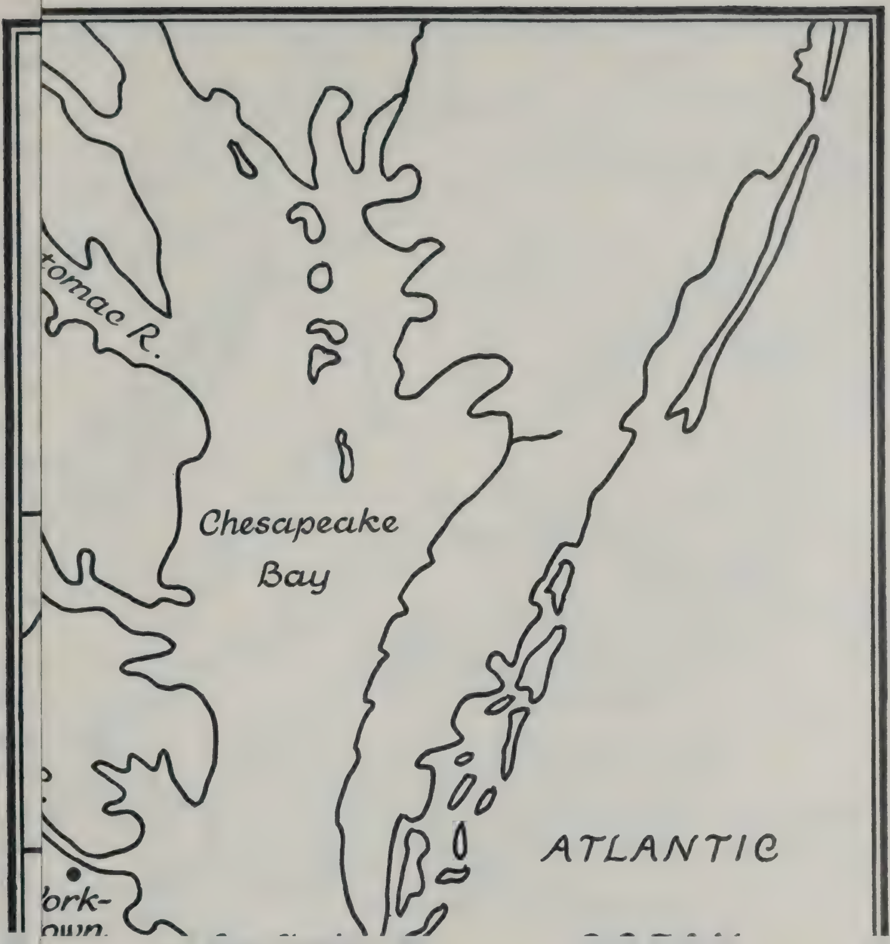
On Monday, New Year's Day, there was no further news and the governor gave no orders. But he invited the Baron to meet with the executive council on Tuesday. Tuesday morning, Jefferson wrote to General Nelson that the report of a hostile fleet "had become totally disbelieved." Later in the day he learned that the enemy was actually sailing up the James. The Baron attended the meeting of the council where it was finally decided to call out 4,000 militia. As the legislature was now adjourning, the governor found another opportunity to practice military economy. He saved the cost of courier service by asking the legislators to carry the militia call back to their counties with them. The result was further delay in assembling the militia. Many of the Virginia statesmen proved to be slow-going Paul Reveres.

2

ON the night of Wednesday, the third, Arnold's flotilla approached the narrow channel at Hoods. An unprotected battery of two small guns and a howitzer had been installed there, When the leading vessels came within range, they received three shots from this battery. This caused a brief delay until a landing party drove out the little militia garrison. If the place had been fortified as Steuben recommended, Arnold's advance must have been checked here until an effective defense of the upcountry could be organized.

Thursday morning Arnold landed at Westover, about eight miles above Hoods and twenty-two miles southeast of Richmond. Here he learned that the militia call had been delayed. He therefore determined to make a sudden dash on Richmond. He marched from Westover Thursday afternoon with 900 men and camped that night about twelve miles from the capital. News of the landing reached the governor early Thursday afternoon. It was now clear that Arnold's objective was Richmond. Jefferson therefore ordered Colonel Muter, commissioner of the war office, to move the state's military property across the river. By this time there were only one hundred militiamen equipped for the field in the city. A few more straggled in during the afternoon, but Colonel Muter was unable to arm them as all of his muskets were now in transit across the James. When the commander of the armed hundred asked for orders, the governor passed the buck to Steuben:

> Maj. Dick calls on me for an order for the militia at this place. I beg you will be so good as to consider the militia of every place as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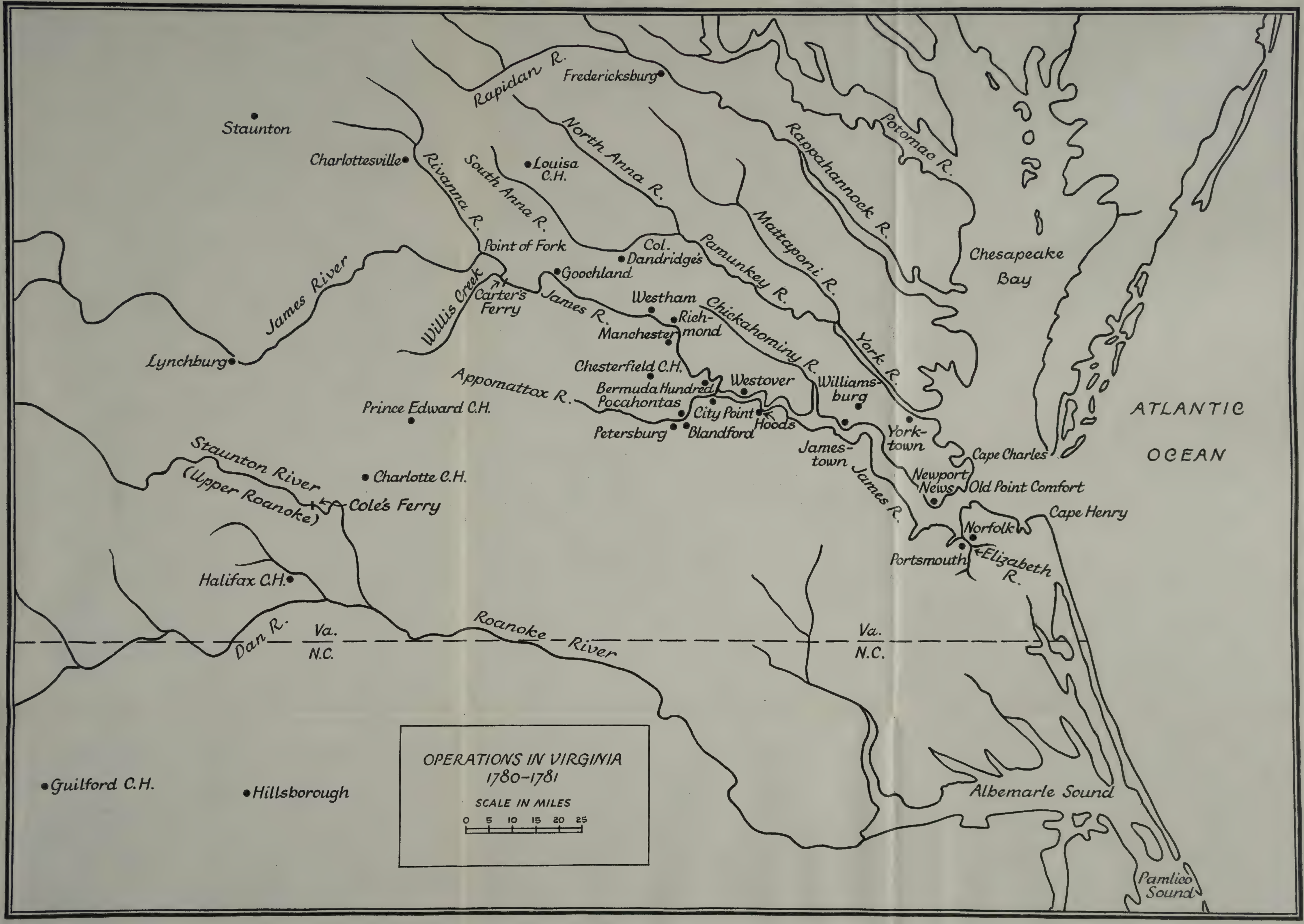

OPERATIONS IN VIRGINIA
1780–1781

SCALE IN MILES
0 5 10 15 20 25
Staunton
Charlottesville
Rivanna R.
South Anna R.
Louisa C.H.
North Anna R.
Rapidan R.
Fredericksburg
Potomac R.
Rappahannock R.
Mattaponi R.
Pamunkey R.
York R.
Chesapeake Bay
Point of Fork
Col. Dandridge's
Goochland
Willis Creek
Carter's Ferry
James R.
James River
Lynchburg
Westham
Richmond
Manchester
Chickahominy R.
Chesterfield C.H.
Appomattox R.
Bermuda Hundred
Pocahontas
Westover
City Point
Hoods
Petersburg
Blandford
Williamsburg
Yorktown
Jamestown
James R.
Prince Edward C.H.
Charlotte C.H.
Staunton River
(Upper Roanoke)
Cole's Ferry
Halifax C.H.
Dan R.
Roanoke River
Va.
N.C.
Va.
N.C.
Cape Charles
Newport News
Old Point Comfort
Cape Henry
Norfolk
Portsmouth
Elizabeth R.
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Albemarle Sound
Pamlico Sound
Guilford C.H.
Hillsborough

> under your command from the moment of their being embodied, and to direct their motions & stations as you please.[3] . . .

Now that it was too late to organize an effective defense, the Baron was placed in command of the state forces.

Steuben ordered Dick to march toward Westover and to fire on the approaching enemy from every point of vantage. But the major could not rise to the occasion. He could find no Thermopylæ where one hundred unorganized farmers could check nine times their number of British regulars. His men had never been in ranks together before that day. Compared with these unorganized Virginians the Massachusetts Minute Men of Concord and Lexington were trained veterans. During the night, Dick shifted from the enemy's front and marched to join General Nelson down toward the Chickahominy. As a result of this prudent maneuver, not a single shot opposed Arnold's advance on the capital of the richest and most populous of the thirteen states.

A few more unorganized militiamen straggled into Richmond after Dick's departure but not enough to defend the town. Steuben therefore crossed over to Manchester and took steps to dispute the passage of the river. About noon the next day, Friday the fifth, Arnold entered Richmond and sent Colonel Simcoe with four hundred men up the river to Westham. There Simcoe destroyed the ordnance repair shop and returned to Richmond that night. He encountered no resistance. Some militia from the upper James Valley reached Westham before Simcoe's arrival, but as Colonel Muter and his Virginia war department had provided no arms for them, they very wisely dispersed. The next morning Arnold burned a number of public buildings in Richmond. Early in the afternoon he marched back toward Westover.

3

GOVERNOR Jefferson's mobilization was as backward elsewhere as it was at Richmond. The day that Arnold entered the capital, Colonel Gibson wrote to Steuben from Petersburg:

> . . . I am doing my utmost to forward everything *pro bono publico*. I am sorry I cannot give you more agreeable intelligence respecting the Militia. Ninety only, *& some of these Ethiopien* have joined the Standard. . . . Those that have already joined are, with their own consent, arranged into Comp^{rs}. . . . My God! What can occasion this total Departure from Virtue on the Part of the People?*[4]

Such was the showing of the Old Dominion a full week after an invader had entered her waters—and this when, according to Jefferson himself, her enrolled militia numbered nearly 50,000 men.[5] But the Baron was not disposed to attribute this shameful record to a "Departure from Virtue on the Part of the People." Nor did he consider it entirely chargeable to incompetent subordinates such as Colonel Muter. He had recently seen another militia mobilization in the little state of New Jersey. There Governor William Livingston had organized his militia to meet sudden emergency. He had therefore been able, on a few hours' notice, to assemble enough well-armed and well-organized men to check the march of 5,000 regulars under Knyphausen until Washington could march from Morristown to Springfield. And now what a contrast between New Jersey and Virginia! After a full week's warning, 900 men under Benedict Arnold could loot the capital and march back to their ships without the loss of a man. To a practical soldier there could be but one explanation. The military resources of New Jersey had been organized with intelligence and foresight. The military resources of Virginia were devoid of effective organization.†

The contrast between New Jersey and Virginia is easily explained. William Livingston had applied all his energies to making himself an effective war governor. Thomas Jefferson had not. He had been thinking of other things. Even a genius will fail to do a thing well when that thing does not interest him and when all of his energies are concentrated elsewhere. Jefferson had dominated the government of Virginia since early in the war; at first as leader in the legislature and later as governor. His leadership was directed toward erecting a new species of government. He was actually embodying Locke's dream of "government by the consent of the governed." In tearing down a privileged oligarchy in Virginia, he undermined legitimate executive authority at the same time. He concentrated on his political ideal as only a great man can concentrate. There was little room in his mind for anything else. He distrusted strong executive power even when it lay in his own hands. He was not only not interested in effective military government but instinctively recoiled from it as something inconsistent with his political ideal. A day would come when America would show that "government by the people" is not inconsistent with effective military authority. But there would be many years of slow and costly evolution from Jefferson to his great disciples, Lincoln and Wilson.

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* The italics are Colonel Gibson's.

† For Steuben's earlier experience with the Virginia Line in the Continental Army, see page 209.

4

WHEN Arnold returned to Westover, it was expected that his next objective would be Petersburg. Steuben therefore marched there on the eighth with several hundred militia from Richmond and a little battalion of Continental recruits from Chesterfield. The latter, however, were so miserable in their nakedness that he ordered them back to their barracks. The militia were now reporting in considerable numbers but the state was unable to arm and equip them. Colonel Charles Harrison wrote to Steuben from Richmond, "Col. Muter still at the helm and in a perfect lethargy."[6] Muter could only find a part of the muskets he had hidden from Arnold, and most of these had been so roughly handled that they were now unserviceable. Finally the Baron found it necessary to lend the state 500 Continental muskets that he had been hoarding for Greene. On January 11 he wrote to Washington: ". . . It is impossible to describe the situation I am in—in want of everything; nothing can be got from the state; rather from want of arrangement [organization] than anything else."

On Thursday, the ninth, Arnold was still at Westover. As Petersburg was now secure, Steuben moved his little militia army down the south shore of the James. On the morning of the tenth, he rode to Coggins Point, opposite Westover. From there he could see the enemy embarking. At about noon they set sail down the river and anchored just above Hoods. There Steuben had placed a detachment of militia under George Rogers Clark.* This detachment ambushed a British landing party, killing seventeen men. But as there were no breastworks, it was promptly dispersed and Arnold resumed his passage down the river. For several days it was uncertain where he might go. He might occupy Williamsburg or Yorktown or he might sail up the Chesapeake. On January 19, he assembled his troops at Portsmouth. By this time the Baron had between 3,000 and 4,000 militia under his command. He was not strong enough to attack Arnold's position. He therefore decided to invest Portsmouth and prevent any egress by land. Again he urged the governor to block the water route to the upcountry by building the little fort at Hoods. Jefferson promised to have this done, but again the work was postponed.

5

ABOUT January 20, Steuben received Greene's letter of the seventh. When Greene wrote this letter, Light-Horse Harry Lee had just arrived with the news that his Legion and Kit Greene's battalion of Continentals would join the Southern army in a few days. Greene also had the Baron's promise that, beginning in mid-January, a battalion of recruits would march from Chesterfield every fortnight. He therefore wrote: "I am exceedingly obliged to you for your exertions in forwarding reenforcements for this Army." He was delighted to know that the Baron expected to join him soon, but

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* Clark had reported to the Baron with a letter from Jefferson introducing him as "Col° Clarke of Kaskaskia."[7] A few days later he returned to Richmond and resumed preparations for his western adventure.

> . . . As reenforcements and supplies are more important than Generals without them, I wish you not to leave Virginia so long as your presence there may be necessary. . . . Col. Lee tells me that you are on exceeding good terms with the Governor and Legislature of Virginia and that they respect and venerate you in the highest degree. I fear when you leave it nothing will be done. The state is lifeless and inactive unless they are often *electriced*.*[8]

At this time Greene did not know that Arnold's invasion had stopped the flow of reënforcements from Virginia.

On the twenty-fifth, Steuben placed Muhlenberg in command of the troops investing Portsmouth, and returned to Richmond in order to "electrice" the state government. He found the situation most discouraging. As Davies could get no clothing for the recruits, he had had to give them furloughs so that they could go home to beg or borrow breeches and shirts. Many of them did not return. This was desertion, of course, but the sympathies of the people were with the deserters. There was no disposition to arrest a soldier for deserting a sovereign who could neither pay, clothe, arm nor feed him. The Baron now wrote Greene that it would be impossible to send him a single battalion before the end of February.

6

BUT if the enemy should sail up the river again there would be no reënforcements at all. The Baron therefore resumed his demand for fortifications at Hoods. After many delays he had been led to believe that work would begin on February 7. On the eleventh, as nothing had been done, he lost his temper and wrote to the governor:

> . . . I must beg your Excellency to consider that the shameful Opposition made to the last invasion falls in some measure on me as the Commanding Officer in the State. . . . My wish is to pre-

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* The italics are mine. The word is Greene's.

> vent a Repitition of the Disgrace, but as I can do nothing without the assistance of the Governor, I must beg your Excellency to give me an answer to this so that I may have it in my power to justify my conduct.[9] . . .

Should the civil authority consider the work at Hoods unnecessary, "I have only to beg they would for my own justification give me their Opinion in writing."

In the course of his reply the governor wrote:

> I have been honored with your reply of yesterdays date. Your representation of the importance of erecting a small work at Hoods was considered by the executive as an evidence of your friendly attention to the defense of the state, and was by them laid before the assembly. . . .

The governor then explained that the work had been delayed by the press of other business and by lack of means. To the Baron's suggestion that the trenches might be dug by working parties from the militia, Jefferson replied that the executive "had no power to call out the militia to do fatigue duty."* Nor could the work be done by the people of the neighborhood. There was no money to pay them and

> The Executive have not by the laws of the State any Power to call a freeman to labor without his consent, nor a slave without that of his master. . . . The Executive are far from thinking this work unnecessary. . . . Yet they may be possibly disappointed in their expectation of engaging voluntary laborers, the only means in their power.[10]

The Baron could not understand this situation. He could see that Virginia had ample military resources, but under Jeffersonian theory of government, they could not be used even for the defense of Virginia. The governor of a Prussian province would have built that little fort in less than a week. The disciple of Frederick the Great could never grasp the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. On the fifteenth he wrote to Washington:

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* We shall see that a few weeks later Jefferson did find legal means of having this work done by the militia, but it was then too late to do any good.

"The Executive Power is so confined that the Governor has it not in his power to procure me 40 negroes to work at Hoods."

7

About the middle of February news came from Greene that he was in full retreat toward Virginia. He had succeeded in concentrating his forces, but Cornwallis was pursuing him with superior numbers. He had written to Steuben on the tenth:

> My expectations . . . will rest chiefly on Virginia so that your exertions to assist me from that quarter will become necessary & I doubt not but proper measures will be taken by you to strengthen me as soon as possible.[11]

With Cornwallis about to invade the Old Dominion, the governor was now fully "electriced." He decided at once to send about 3,000 militia southward, leaving the details of organization to Steuben. It was easy enough to summon 3,000 men but only one third of them could be armed. Fortunately the freemen from the back country were hardy woodsmen who carried their own rifles with them. Eight hundred of these, now with Muhlenberg, were relieved by tidewater militia and ordered south. Additional riflemen were summoned from west of the mountains and every man along the North Carolina frontier who could bring a firelock with him was placed at Greene's disposal. In a few days, the best of Virginia's yeomen were on the way to North Carolina. The Baron gave them hasty but effective organization under selected Continental officers.

8

While Steuben was in the midst of these preparations, news came that a French fleet had arrived in the Chesapeake to coöperate in the capture of Arnold. This called for new exertions. Steuben sent a staff officer to concert plans with the French commander. He ordered Muhlenberg to prepare for an attack on Portsmouth. He ordered militia reënforcements to cross from the north shore of the James and even prevailed on the governor to impress boats—*without* the consent of the governed—for the passage of the river.

For a few days there was great excitement. The people were thrilled with the hope of impending victory. This was soon followed by disappointment. The French fleet proved to be only one ship of the line and two frigates under Commodore de Tilly. He had no troops with him and he soon found that the Americans were not equipped for an assault on Portsmouth. Muhlenberg had 3,000 men but he had only 300 bayonets and his only cannon were two 6-pounders. It was suggested that De Tilly should sail up the narrow channel of Elizabeth River and use his guns to make up the shortage of field artillery. This, as a sensible seaman, he declined to do. A few days later he sailed out of the Chesapeake, much to the disgust of his American allies.[12] If the French had aroused false hopes, it was the fault of their American allies. On January 26 Richard Henry Lee had written to Bland in Congress that with the assistance of one ship of the line and two frigates, "the militia now in arms are sufficient to smother these invaders in a moment." Without consulting the military authorities, Bland transmitted this amateur war plan to the French minister who passed it on to Des Touches, the naval commander at Newport. Des Touches dispatched the ships at once under De Tilly. De Tilly found that he was not expected, that no plans had been made to receive him and that the whole scheme was impracticable. The only results were friction and misunderstanding between the allies and a further waste of Virginia's military resources.

9

ABOUT February 18 good news came from Greene. He had ferried his army across the Dan and now a flooded river flowed between him and Cornwallis. His Lordship must wait for the river to fall. This would give time for Greene to receive his riflemen and other reënforcements from Virginia. Cornwallis had lost his chance. He therefore withdrew his exhausted troops to Hillsborough, North Carolina, while Greene reorganized his rapidly growing army at Halifax, Virginia. Greene would soon be strong enough to recross the Dan and take the initiative in his own hands.

On the twenty-seventh Steuben wrote to Greene that the arrival of clothing from the north had enabled him to send a battalion of 400 Continentals southward on the twenty-fifth. He expected to send another on April 1, another April 15 and another May 1. He would himself march to the Southern army with the latter, leaving Davies to command the base in Virginia. He also informed Greene that within a few days he would have eight 18-pounders installed in his fort at Hoods.[13] As we shall see later, the Baron was overoptimistic when he wrote this letter.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MARQUIS ARRIVES

1

ABOUT the end of February the Baron received a dispatch from Washington written on the twentieth, informing him that a strong French fleet would soon sail for Virginia to coöperate in the capture of Arnold. The fleet would bring 1,200 French infantry and eight siege guns. An equal force of American light infantry had been ordered to the head of Chesapeake Bay whence French ships would convey them to Hampton Roads. The Baron was instructed to make all necessary preparations for an attack on Portsmouth as soon as the reënforcements should arrive.

Here was a chance for brilliant victory. With 2,400 French and American regulars supported by heavy artillery, with the French fleet commanding Virginia waters, and with the Virginia militia investing Portsmouth by land, Arnold's detachment would be captured or destroyed. Once Virginia was thus secured, it would be possible to send effective support to Greene. Here was a chance of decisive victory. But there was a fly in the ointment. The Baron had long been hoping for just such a reenforcement from the North. He had always assumed that it would come under his command and that he would win the glory of victory. Washington's letter dashed this hope. The light infantry would be commanded by Lafayette who, though but a boy, was Steuben's senior in rank. The Baron must therefore do all the work of preparation and leave the laurels for the marquis to reap. This was a sad blow, but Steuben remained a loyal and subordinate soldier. On March 3 he wrote Greene: ". . . But do not think, my dear General, that this idea, however mortifying, will in the least relax my zeal in the affair: on the contrary I hope the Marquis will find everything prepared for his arrival."[1]

Washington had sound reasons for sending Lafayette. In the first place, the success of the operations would depend upon cooperation with the French. In the second place, he was not certain that Steuben was still in Virginia. His last letter indicated that he was about to join Greene in the South.

2

WHEN the Baron made his plans for the joint campaign against Portsmouth, the state government promised full support. Additional militia would be called, supplies would be accumulated, boats would be collected for the passage of the James, and horses would be procured for the artillery and a detachment of mounted infantry. But as usual there was little action. On March 9 the Baron lost his temper and wrote to the governor:

> . . . On the assurance I received from Government, . . . I had the weakness to write to Gen^l Washington & Marquis De la Fayette that everything was ready for the Expedition. My credulity, however, is punished at the expense of my honor, and the only excuse I have is my Confidence in the Government. . . . [Here follows a complaint that the Baron's chief quartermaster had been unable to obtain the assistance of the state authorities in procuring supplies and horses.] In fact if the powers of the State are inadequate to furnishing what is indispensably necessary, the Expedition must fail.
>
> In this situation, I suspend giving any orders till I receive your Excellency's answer to this, which answer I will lay before the Marquis and the Commander of the French fleet, that they may not engage too far in an enterprize which there is no prospect of carrying through.
>
> I beg your Excellency to lay this letter before the Assembly.[2]

In replying the next day, the governor wrote:

> . . . We can only be answerable for the orders we give and not for their execution. If they are disobeyed from obstinacy of spirit or want of coercion in the laws, it is not our fault. * . . . We did not

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* Here is a naïve confession of Jefferson's weakness and incapacity as a war governor. If the laws of Virginia lacked "coercion," it was largely his fault. He had dominated her legislative policy for more than four years.

think it proper to resign ourselves & our Country implicitly to the demands of a Quartermaster, but thought we had some right of judgment left to us. . . . I have laid your letter before the Assembly according to your desire.[3] . . .

The governor had authorized the quartermaster department to impress boats and horses, but refused the aid of the militia in executing the impress warrants. As the news of the horse draft spread through the country, most of the farmers had time to hide their animals. One enterprising quartermaster wrote to the Baron that, in spite of these difficulties, he had collected thirty-two horses. In the course of his letter he said: "I received the inclosed Instructions which has obliged me to give up some of my most Serviceable Nags."[4] The inclosure was a letter from His Excellency the Governor of Virginia written "In Council": ". . . You will be pleased to return the Studd Horses & Mairs kept for breeding of those which have been impressed under the power given by me in consequence of the Requisition For the Service near Portsmouth."[5]

3

On March 14 Lafayette arrived at Yorktown, having left his troops at Annapolis to await transports from the French fleet. On the fifteenth the old Baron rode to Yorktown to report to his boy commander. After a friendly conference, the marquis wrote to Washington that operations would begin at once on the arrival of the French ships. During the ensuing week the marquis and the Baron continued their preparations. On the twentieth news finally came that a fleet was entering the Virginia capes. But later reports revealed that it bore the English flag. The French had been defeated in a naval battle and had returned to Newport. On the twenty-sixth English transports arrived at Portsmouth with a reënforcement of 2,000 men under General Phillips. Lafayette wrote to Washington:

. . . The Return of the British fleet with vessels that must be transports from New York, is a circumstance which destroys every prospect of an operation against Arnold. . . . Never has an

> operation been more ready (on our Side) nor Conquest more certain. But since we must give it up, I shall return to Annapolis.

While the marquis and the Baron were still in suspense great news came from North Carolina. Cornwallis attacked Greene on March 15 and drove him from the field at Guilford Court House. But it was a Pyrrhic victory. Cornwallis lost so heavily in the battle that he could no longer keep the field. A few days later he began his retreat toward his sea base at Wilmington.* Greene now took up the pursuit. If he could overtake Cornwallis before his short-term militia left him, he might win a decisive victory. He was grateful to the Baron for his loyal support. On March 11 he wrote:

> I feel myself much indebted to you for your good conduct and zeal for the Southern interest. I am sensible of the great trouble you have been at in regulating the military affairs of Virginia, and shall be ever mindful to do justice to your merit.[6]

4

JUST before Lafayette's departure for Annapolis, Steuben assembled his subordinates at Williamsburg to consider the situation. Now that British reënforcements had come, what could be done to defend upper Virginia and to support Greene in North Carolina? It had been possible to hold Arnold's 1,600 men in Portsmouth, but it would be impossible to hold 3,600 men under Phillips.† With no fort at Hoods to check him, he would be able to invade the upper country at will, and this would stop all further succor for the Southern army.

The Baron proposed a brilliant strategic plan to meet this situation. He would take the initiative before Phillips could act. He proposed that 2,000 picked militia, under his own command, should march to join the Southern army immediately. This would give Greene a decisive superiority over Cornwallis. But how about General Phillips at Portsmouth? Would he not improve this opportunity to ascend the James and complete the invasion of Virginia? No, the Baron insisted. Phillips would have to hurry to North Carolina to save Cornwallis. This would draw the enemy away from Virginia. Greene would be able to crush Cornwallis and then turn on Phillips with all his forces. This plan was strongly endorsed by Lafayette before his departure. On the twenty-seventh General Weedon wrote to Governor Jefferson:

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* About 165 miles southeast of Guilford Court House.

† Phillips, who was Arnold's senior, had taken command.

> The honorable Major General Baron de Steuben will lay before your Excellency an Expedition, suggested by himself, which meets the full approbation of a Military Board convened on the occasion & which may, if agreed to by the Hon^ble^ Executive, in great measure terminate the war.[7]

Later, Washington wrote to the Baron:

> Had it been possible for you to have carried your plan of marching suddenly into North Carolina into Execution, it would most probably have occasioned the ruin of Lord Cornwallis.[8]

But the civil authority had not an idea beyond local security. Jefferson submitted the Baron's plan to a "Board of Council" which reported on March 29:

> Altho' the proposition seemed to them to be founded on a very probable principle, yet, as the number of arms that such a detachment would necessarily carry off with them was greater than the number that would remain in the State, it would be a measure unjustifiable in the present circumstances of affairs, the enemy having lately received a great reenforcement.[9]

This decision deprived Greene of an opportunity to overwhelm Cornwallis before he could restore his shattered army. It also left Virginia at the mercy of Phillips. The initiative was surrendered to him. He would now be able to invade any part of the state at his discretion.

The rejection of his plan of campaign marks an epoch in Steuben's relations with the Virginia authorities. He no longer concealed his contempt for their feeble policy. For their part, the state officials resented his outspoken criticism. He quite lost his early popularity. His enemies insisted that he sought to sacrifice the interests of Virginia. The people at large could not understand the broader view that the defeat of Cornwallis would be the best defense of their state.

About this time, however, a reform in the state administration gave the Baron some encouragement. The governor appointed Davies to succeed the incompetent Muter as "commissioner of the war office." From now on the military administration of the state would be in able hands. But it was too late for any effective reform. Four years of neglect and mismanagement had already dissipated the military resources of Virginia. As Davies wrote to the Baron:

> . . . The affairs of this state are strangely confused, and I am sure will continue so, unless a speedy reformation takes place. My best endeavor shall never cease to restore matters if possible, and make them less absurd than they have hitherto been in their arrangements.[10] . . .

CHAPTER XXXV

PHILLIPS' INVASION

1

THE Baron was now eager to wind up his business in Virginia. On March 30 he wrote to Greene, "I am not less tired of this State than they are of me";[1] and again on April 2:

> . . . If I preferred my own inclination to the public interest, I should immediately set out to join you; my desire to act under your immediate orders, and the disgust I have for my situation here are motives equally forcible to urge my departure hence. I however think it is my duty to remain here till I am to bring my first detachment with me, which I intend shall amount to five hundred Infantry and sixty to eighty Cavalry, and for this I am now exerting my utmost.[2]

But the prospect of procuring Continental soldiers was not encouraging. When the Baron returned to Chesterfield he expected to find 500 recruits in the barracks. He found only 5, and 3 of these deserted in a few days.[3] Voluntary enlistment for the Continentals had stopped. Nobody was willing to serve in the Carolinas when Virginia herself was invaded. The assembly had authorized a draft, but the statute contained a proviso that almost nullified the law. A county was exempt from the draft while it had militia in the field and this exemption now applied to most of the counties in the state. About April 9, Steuben heard from Greene:

> I see and feel for your disagreeable situation . . . but if you leave Virginia everything will run into confusion. . . . I am greatly in want of your aid here as well as there; but it is my opinion that you can be more extensively useful there than here.[4]

2

THE outlook for local defense was most discouraging. Most of the militia in the field had been called out in January for three months' service. For reasons of economy, the governor was reluctant to summon new levies until the old levies were relieved. On April 8 Muhlenberg wrote to the Baron:

> . . . The militia who have served their time of three months have partly discharged themselves & compel me to discharge the rest. No argument will prevail on them to stay—100 deserted from my camp in one night. I shall be left with about 700.[5]

With 700 militia south of the James and only 500 north of the river, it was no longer possible to invest Portsmouth. Muhlenberg therefore withdrew toward Petersburg. Jefferson informed the Baron that the whole of the new levy would not be in the field before the end of the month.[6] If the enemy should advance now he would encounter little resistance.

By the middle of the month it was certain that Phillips would soon take the offensive. He had built twenty-five boats, each big enough for one hundred men. But his objective was unknown. By skilful feints toward the Potomac and the Rappahannock, he kept the Baron in a state of suspense and uncertainty. The prospect of a new raid up the James finally stirred the state authorities. They now made a tardy effort to complete the battery and field works at Hoods. Colonel Senf was there on the fourteenth to supervise the work, but no laborers reported. On the nineteenth he received a dispatch by courier from the governor. Jefferson had at last found a means of procuring laborers without paying them and without open compulsion. The work would be done by the yeomanry of Prince George County. Each freeman who would work twelve days in the trenches would have credit for six weeks of militia duty. A few men started to work the morning of the twentieth. But when they learned, a few hours later, that Phillips had entered the James, they discharged themselves and went home.[7] The governor's plan for procuring laborers was ingenious and should have been effective if he had thought of it sooner. If he had contrived it four months earlier it would have spared him the disgrace of Arnold's capture of Richmond. It was now too late to prevent a second humiliation at the hands of Phillips.

On the twenty-first, before he knew that Senf's laborers had absconded, the Baron wrote to Washington:

> . . . The Militia come in very slowly. . . . The battery at Hood's is not half finished. Everything is in the same confusion as when Arnold came up the River. There is not a single company of regular troops in the State, and the militia are too inexperienced to hope for the least resistance from them. . . .

The whole situation was black for the American cause. But there was one silver lining to the cloud. Word had come that Lafayette was marching back to Virginia and that Wayne would soon reënforce him with a detachment from the Pennsylvania Line. If Phillips could be checked until the marquis arrived the situation might be restored.

3

UNTIL the night of the twenty-third, the Baron believed that the British would first occupy Williamsburg. Early on the twenty-fourth it was learned that Phillips was sailing toward the upper river. About noon his transports were above Hoods at Westover. But the Baron was still in suspense. Phillips might move on Richmond or he might move on Petersburg. He might land on either side of the river any place between Westover and Bermuda Hundred. It was therefore impossible to concentrate against him. This was the situation because Virginia's war governor had again failed to close the strategic doorway at Hoods.

Late in the afternoon, Phillips landed his troops at City Point. It was now clear that his objective was Petersburg. As the Baron wrote to Washington on the twenty-fifth:

> . . . In this critical situation there were many reasons against risking a total defeat—the loss of arms was a principal one; and, on the other hand to retire without some show of resistance would have Intimidated the inhabitants and encouraged the enemy to further incursions. This last consideration determined me to de-

> fend the place as far as our inferiority in numbers would permit. I made choice of Blandford for the place of defence and the Bridge of Pocahontas for our retreat; the Troops were disposed accordingly and past the night under arms.
>
> . . . Towards noon [the 25th] the enemy came in sight . . . but it was near 3 o'clock before the firing commenc'd, which continued from post to post till past five, when the Superior number of the Enemy and a want of Ammunition Obliged me to order a retreat, and the bridge to be taken up, which was executed in the greatest Order, notwithstanding the fire of the Enemy's cannon and musketry.

The Baron concluded with a high tribute to General Muhlenberg's skill and gallantry and praise for the steadiness of the troops. On May 9 Jefferson wrote to Washington:

> The Enemy was received by Steuben with a body of militia, somewhat under one thousand, who, though the enemy were two thousand three hundred strong, disputed the ground very handsomely for two hours, during which time the enemy gained one mile only. . . .

On the night of the twenty-fifth Steuben retreated toward Chesterfield Court House. On the twenty-sixth the enemy destroyed a great quantity of tobacco in Petersburg, and the next day marched to Chesterfield and burned the vacant barracks and the storehouses, from which, fortunately, all supplies had been removed. The Baron kept in contact with the enemy but was too weak for effective resistance. On the twenty-ninth Phillips was at Manchester, preparing to attack Richmond, when he learned that Steuben had been reënforced by Lafayette and his Continentals. He decided to return to Portsmouth and marched from Manchester on May 1. The next day he reëmbarked at Bermuda Hundred and set sail down the river.

4

THE day after his little battle at Blandford, the Baron received a letter from General Phillips which throws light on the refinements of military etiquette in the eighteenth century:

> Sir:—My aide-de-camp's Servant, John Portnes, was taken yesterday. I request you will have the goodness to send him back as soon as possible. I conceive nothing but the little hurry of yesterday could have prevented this being done without application, as I imagine you are a Gentleman who perfectly understands these Civilities, which have been practised by the King's Officers on all occasions, particularly in the instance of General Stuben's servant and others taken by Colonel Simcoe in the last expedition, who were sent back immediately.[8]

The Baron replied on April 30:

> Sir—Before I received your letter, left at a Tavern, relating to your aid-de-camps servant, orders had been given to send him in. Be assured, Sir, that I know and that I wish to observe that politeness from Gentleman to Gentleman and from Officer to Officer. If I was difficient in not sending him in the same day he was taken, yourself have been happy enough to find my excuse—A Retreat before three times my number, commanded by Gen. Phillips, certainly demanded all my attention.[9] . . .

CHAPTER XXXVI

CORNWALLIS COMES TO VIRGINIA

1

THE marquis now took command of the troops in the field and the Baron returned to his original mission of collecting reënforcements for Greene. In the meantime Phillips was sailing slowly down the James. By the morning of May 7 his transports were below Jamestown. There, he suddenly turned and sailed back up the river. Favored by a steady breeze, his advanced troops were back in Petersburg by nightfall. This sudden change in the situation was no mystery to Lafayette. That same day he sent a special courier to Anthony Wayne, urging him to hurry on with his detachment of the Pennsylvania Line, and informing him that Cornwallis was on the march to join Phillips at Petersburg.[1] Having reorganized his army at Wilmington, His Lordship had decided to march to Virginia instead of to South Carolina where Greene was expecting him.

Notwithstanding the approach of Cornwallis, the marquis agreed that reënforcements must go to Greene who had recently been defeated by Rawdon at Hobkirk's Hill. On May 5 he wrote to Washington that he expected to send 800 Continentals southward within a fortnight. On the fifteenth Steuben wrote to Greene from Carter's Ferry:*

> . . . The Marquis . . . will doubtless inform you of everything which concerns the military operations. I heartily wish his exploits may be more brilliant than mine have been. I must confess I have not yet learnt how to beat regular troops with one third their number of militia. . . .
>
> When the Marquis arrived I . . . again turned my attention to collecting and equipping the Recruits and, with the Marquis' consent, fixed the general rendezvous at Albemarle Barracks. [Near Charlottesville.] We have as yet only 430 recruits as-

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* About forty miles up the river from Richmond.

sembled, unarmed, unequipped and without clothes. Nor do I expect 400 more. . . .

Notwithstanding this, my care to keep together and equip the few we have got, has not failed to draw on me the censure of many of the great men here, who pretend that these recruits should be sent immediately in the field, and relieve so many militia. . . .

Having completed these arrangements, I shall join the Marquis till I receive your orders, and I must give you notice, that from the many difficulties that daily occur, and of which I have only mentioned a small part, my presence in this State has become entirely useless. I shall, with great pleasure, fly to put myself under your immediate command, and I beseech you, my dear General, to call me as soon as possible, for never was a man more disgusted than I am at the conduct and proceedings in this quarter.[2] . . .

2

The Baron got his marching orders soon after he dispatched his letter of May 15. When Greene learned that Lafayette was ordered to Virginia he wrote Steuben:

. . . This will afford me an opportunity of indulging your wishes in joining the army. And it is my wish that you march with all the Virginia drafts that are fit to take the field as soon as you can. . . . Our situation requires immediate support. . . . I find myself so beset with difficulties that I need the counsel and assistance of an officer educated in the Prussian school, and I persuade myself I shall find in you both the friend and the General I want.[3] . . .

When he wrote this letter, on May 1, Greene expected that Cornwallis would soon reënforce Rawdon in South Carolina. The Southern army would then need every possible support. But on learning that Cornwallis had marched to join Phillips in Virginia, he immediately countermanded his original orders. He now instructed Lafayette to retain all the Continental recruits in Virginia and directed the Baron to remain and cooperate with the marquis. But these later orders were intercepted by the enemy and did not reach their destination.

The situation had so changed since Greene wrote his letter of May 1 that the marquis was inclined to detain the Virginia Continentals on his own responsibility. This appears from his letter to Steuben written on May 17.[4] In finally deciding not to countermand Greene's orders he was probably influenced by political considerations. A few days later, he wrote to Alexander Hamilton: ". . . The Baron and the few new levies he could collect are ordered to South Carolina. I am glad he goes, as the hatred of the Virginians to him is truly hurtful to the service.[5] . . ." If the Baron was sick of Virginia, Virginia was also sick of him. Her statesmen were tired of his pungent and overfrank reflections on their military policy and administration. That his criticisms were generally well grounded did not make them any more palatable, and there was also a personal reason why it was uncomfortable for the marquis and the Baron to serve together in the same theater of war. The old soldier's being commanded by a mere boy was embarrassing to both of them. Steuben was always subordinate and Lafayette was always considerate, but neither could forget that the Baron was a war-scarred veteran before the marquis was born.

Cornwallis finally reached Petersburg on May 20. After his junction with Arnold's* detachment, his total force numbered about 5,000. Lafayette, at this time, had about 1,000 Continentals and 3,000 militia. Wayne was marching to join him with another thousand regulars, but was still far away. His Lordship's effective strength was greatly increased by his mobility. With his gunboats and transports, the estuaries of Virginia were highways for him and obstacles for his enemy. Cornwallis was also able to mount Tarleton's Legion and much of his line infantry on blooded Virginia horses. Lafayette, on the other hand, had been unable to procure enough horses for the little mounted detachment he sorely needed. There were plenty of cavalry horses in Virginia, but under "government by consent of the governed" these had been scrupulously denied to the defender and so conserved for the invader.

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* Phillips died suddenly just before Cornwallis' arrival. This left Arnold in command of the detachment at Petersburg for a few days.

3

On May 26 Steuben wrote to Greene from Albemarle Court House that he had been there since the twenty-first, preparing for his march southward.[6] He had collected about 500 recruits and expected not over 60 more. But it was so difficult to procure clothing and blankets that he would be unable to march before June 4. In the meantime he was anxious for news. He reminded Greene that his last letter was written before Greene knew that Cornwallis had marched to Virginia.

That same day, the Baron wrote to Chancellor Frank[7] and to General von Bouvinghausen,[8] an old friend at Stuttgart. As usual in his letters to his German friends he indulges in poetic license. He informs Frank that last November he was assigned by special act of Congress to command all the troops in Virginia. Since then he has been confronted by greatly superior numbers, but he has "always held the enemy in check and gained some minor advantages." Without making any reference to Lafayette, he adds, "I am now about to seek my revenge from Lord Cornwallis."

In his letter to Bouvinghausen he gives his imagination full rein and soars into the empyrean:

> . . . Do you know, my dear friend, that the State of Pennsylvania has made me a grant of 22,000 acres. Virginia has given me 15,000. As a major general, Congress has given me 12,500 acres. The state of New York is planning to make me a similar grant. The price of an acre of land is a louis d'or: The lowest price is a pound sterling. I am therefore the owner of 49,000 acres of land or the same number of guineas. Besides this Congress has assured me that my pay of 15,000 francs will continue as long as I live. . . .

In view of his great wealth, his growing infirmities and the uncertainties of the impending campaign, he has just made his will, which he outlines in great detail. General Washington, Colonel Everard Meade and Colonel John Walker are to be his executors. Young Von Canitz, the elder of his sister's two sons, is to be his heir. The young man is to

> come to America, taking my name without the title of Baron or any other sign of nobility. As a good Republican, he shall be called Canitz-Steuben. I add only the condition that he shall become a citizen of America. . . . [He] shall be the sole heir of all my present possessions, as well as those I may yet receive from the thirteen United States of America. . . .
>
> . . . My heir, under direction of the executors, shall pay the following legacies:

To my aide-de-camp, Major Walker,	2000	louis d'or
“ “ “ “ “ Major North,	1000	“ “
“ “ “ “ “ Captain Fairlee,	1000	“ “
“ Captain de Pontiere,	500	“ “
“ M. Beaumarchais,	200	“ “
“ Baron von Hahn,	200	“ “
“ Chancellor Frank,	200	“ “

> . . . It shall likewise be the duty of my heir to give 200 louis d'or to each of the [three] sons of the friend to whom this letter is written in grateful appreciation of the fact that he was the first of my friends in Europe to send me, in this part of the world, proofs of his attachment.

The heir is also instructed to present each of the executors with a gold snuffbox bearing the Baron's portrait and to cost 60 louis d'or. Four other golden boxes each costing 50 louis d'or and bearing the inscription, "Friendship unto death," are to be made. These are to be given to Bouvinghausen, Walker, North and Fairlie.

The letter continues:

> Should Heaven call me in this campaign, I beg you to acquaint my nephew with my last wishes. M. de Beaumarchais, in Paris, will give him the necessary money to make the journey in comfort and I commit the young Steuben to your fatherly friendship. . . .

When my nephew arrives here, General Washington will be his father.* . . .

The Baron rather overstated his assets when he wrote that letter to Bouvinghausen. It is true that Virginia had awarded him 15,000 acres, but the other alleged land grants were still mere expressions of sanguine expectancy. Nor were the Virginia lands worth a guinea an acre. They still lay unlocated and unsurveyed in the wilderness west of the Alleghenies. Had the Baron sought to sell his real estate claims that day, it must have been an optimistic land speculator who could have offered him enough real money to buy one of the snuffboxes he proposed to bequeath to his executors. As to his military income, his statement was superficially correct. His yearly pay and allowances of $3,000 were theoretically equivalent to 15,000 francs. But unfortunately, 3,000 Continental dollars were now worth less than 100 francs in hard money. For months he had been living on his rations and what he could borrow from his friends.

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* Later, the Baron learned that young Canitz and his brother had grown up as depraved and vicious young men. In 1785, they borrowed money from Beaumarchais on Steuben's account[9] and came to America as his uninvited guests. They remained almost a year, causing him great annoyance and expense. On their return journey they wasted the money he gave them and embezzled other funds intrusted to them by their uncle and one of his friends.[10] In his last will, Steuben excluded his German relatives and made Walker and North his heirs.[11]

CHAPTER XXXVII

POINT OF FORK[1]

1

WHILE the Baron was struggling to equip his recruits, Cornwallis opened his Virginia campaign. Marching from Petersburg on May 24, he ferried the river at Westover. Thence, on the twenty-sixth, he marched on Richmond to overwhelm Lafayette. But the marquis was not to be caught in such a trap. With 1,000 Continentals and 3,000 militia he could offer no serious resistance. He therefore abandoned Richmond* and marched northward to meet Wayne and his reenforcements. Cornwallis followed him in full pursuit.

When news of the evacuation of Richmond reached the Baron on the twenty-eighth, he realized that his little detachment at Albemarle Barracks was now the only body of American troops in the upper James Valley. This left the military stores of the state in serious jeopardy. Most of these had been stored at Point of Fork where the Rivanna flows into the James about forty-five miles above Richmond. The main stream, or south fork, was then known as the Fluvanna. Point of Fork is the tongue of land between these two streams.

Upon the arrival of Cornwallis in Virginia, orders had been issued to move the military stores further westward. But the evacuation, a slow process, was still incomplete. And now, since Lafayette's retreat, the enemy controlled the whole country north of the James, and Point of Fork was at the mercy of hostile raiding parties. The Rivanna offered little protection as it was fordable in many places. As a first step toward security, the stores must be moved to the south shore of the main stream. The Baron therefore decided to march with his recruits to Point of Fork. There, his detachment would temporarily cover the removal of the stores. But he warned the state authorities that he would march southward as soon as his men were equipped, and that his detachment of Continentals must not be regarded as a mere guard for state property. Before he left Albemarle Barracks he wrote to Lafayette that he was moving to Point of Fork and he expressed misgivings about his march southward without further orders from Greene: ". . . I should therefore think it prudent to await another letter from him. Indeed, necessity would oblige me to wait some days, as the men are not ready for such a march.[2] . . ."

---

* The seat of government had been transferred to Charlottesville.

2

SOON after his arrival at Point of Fork, the Baron received Lafayette's dispatch of the twenty-ninth.[3] He was still on his way toward the Rappahannock. Cornwallis was in close pursuit and Wayne was still many miles away. Hard pressed as he was, Lafayette still felt that Greene should have the reënforcements he expected from Virginia. The Baron replied the next day that Greene could expect no support other than the recruits at Point of Fork.[4] He also expressed the opinion that his little detachment would embarrass the enemy more by marching southward than by remaining in Virginia. Such a march would compel Cornwallis to detach a relatively large force in pursuit and this would relieve the pressure north of the James. He therefore announced that he would march southward as soon as he could clothe his men, unless the marquis sent him positive orders to the contrary. The correspondence shows that both the marquis and the Baron were in a quandary. Should they comply with Greene's last orders or assume that the changed situation in Virginia had nullified them? Though Greene was no longer threatened by Lord Cornwallis, he was still opposed by Lord Rawdon.

But the Baron did not receive even the limited supplies that he expected. His importunate demands upon the state authorities were disregarded. The tone of his letters to the governor and, over the governor's head, to the legislature, did not help the situation. He did not conceal his contempt for their policy. He attributed all the disasters in Virginia to their laches. If they had supported him in his efforts to reconstruct the Virginia Line, Cornwallis could never have invaded the Old Dominion for Greene must have crushed him in North Carolina. On June 3 he wrote to the Speaker of the House:

> . . . A few days ago I had the honor of informing you of the State of the Virginia Line in general. I hope you have made known to the honorable assembly the contents of that letter. . . . The object of the present is to acquaint you of the condition of the men now collected here. Most of them arrived destitute of every article of clothing. . . . It is painful to me to see the number of sick men increasing every day. . . . The soldier who would be willing to lose his life in battle, objects to being sacrificed. . . . I expected to find here shirts, shoes, jackets or hunting shirts and blankets. . . . I would never have believed that . . . the entire State of Virginia could not furnish those objects for five hundred men, being the sixth part of the supply voted by the Assembly in the month of November. . . .
>
> I sincerely request you, Sir, to lay this before the honorable assembly. It is . . . of importance for me to be justified in the eyes of that estimable body and before the people of the state, lest the delay before these troops can take the field be charged to my negligence.[5] . . .

Most of the Virginia statesmen had as little liking for the Baron, at this time, as he had for them. Benjamin Harrison wrote to a friend in Congress a few days later:

> We have 600 fine men under Baron Stuben w^{ch} he will not carry into action. What are his reasons, I know not, but I can assure you his Conduct gives universal disgust and injures the Service much, the People complaining, and with reason, that they are drafted from their Families at a time when they are most wanted to make bread for them, whilst the Soldiers they have hired at very great expense lay Idle. In short, My D^{r} Sir, his conduct does great mischief and will do more if he is not recalled, and I think it behoves you to bring it about. I assure you it is the wish and desire

of every man that this Event sh^{d} take place. I believe him a good officer on the Parade but the worst in every other respect in the American Army.[6]

On June 3, the Baron wrote to the marquis:

> No letters from General Greene and none from you. . . . Here I am with 550 men in a desert. Without shoes, shirts and . . . cartridge boxes. I write everywhere . . . but receive no answer. . . . If I did not expect Lawson [a militia general] . . . I would go to Charlottesville to sing a jeremiad to my sovereign masters [the state government]. . . . Please let me have news of you. I am here as I would be in Kamchatka. I do not know where you are or what has become of Cornwallis.[7] . . .

This total lack of news was due to a change in the military situation. When Cornwallis arrived at the North Anna on June 1, he realized that Lafayette had made good his escape. He therefore decided to return to the James Valley with his main army after making two important detachments. He sent Tarleton to Charlottesville to capture Governor Jefferson and the legislature, and Simcoe to Point of Fork to surprise the Baron. After his raid on Charlottesville, Tarleton was to march down the Rivanna and join Simcoe. By that time, His Lordship with the main body would reach the James at Goochland Court House, about a day's march below Point of Fork. It thus appears that the whole British Army would soon be in striking distance of Steuben's little detachment.

Of all this the Baron was ignorant when he wrote to the marquis on the third. During that night word came that a hostile column was moving up the James from Goochland Court House. As this report was unconfirmed, Steuben took no action except to expedite the transfer of the state stores across the river. Early next morning, Major Call of the cavalry arrived and reported that hostile cavalry was at Goochland the morning of the third and another party, about 1,000 strong, at Louisa Court House in the afternoon. Call had seen both of these columns and had barely escaped capture.

3

THE Baron now knew that at least two strong hostile columns threatened his position. Cornwallis was apparently returning toward the James. His main body was probably within supporting distance of the detachments reported by Major Call. If Steuben would carry out his mission of taking a reënforcement to Greene, he must immediately send his battalion to the south shore of the James. His position within the fork was untenable. Hostile cavalry would soon cross at one of the upper fords of the Rivanna and march down to entrap him in the angle between the two streams. Once south of the James, he would be secure from immediate attack as the main stream was in flood. But even there his security would be only temporary. Should Cornwallis seek to prevent his junction with Greene, he would effect a crossing within a few miles of the fork. Once across, his numerous cavalry would cut off the Baron's retreat. The Baron was too sensible a soldier to believe that 500 recruits can hold a river line against 5,000 veterans under a resourceful commander. Should he delay his retreat too long, his battalion would never reach Greene. It would be captured or destroyed.

Upon receiving Major Call's report, the Baron marched his battalion up the Rivanna to a position where he could cover the transfer of his field baggage to the south shore of the James. When the baggage was safely across, he followed with the battalion, leaving fifty men at the fork with orders to patrol toward the fords of the Rivanna. He also drew all of his boats to the south shore of the main stream. Having secured his detachment from immediate attack, the Baron exerted himself to remove the state stores, some of which were still exposed on the south shore of the James. He gave instructions that all property that could not be hauled away should be hidden in the woods. He lent his battalion baggage wagons to the state authorities for this purpose. It was not his mission to remain to do guard and fatigue duty for the State of Virginia, but while he waited for the situation to clear, he did all that he could to aid the state authorities.

Early the morning of the fifth he sent a lieutenant with four dragoons to patrol up the Rivanna. As this whole detachment was captured by Simcoe, it was some time before the Baron knew that the enemy had already crossed the Rivanna at an upper ford. While he was still in doubt as to the enemy's exact position, he sent a courier to Lafayette reporting that he was threatened, the day before, by two hostile columns and had therefore crossed to the south bank of the James. He announced that as soon as the weather cleared, he would withdraw to the mouth of Willis Creek (about seven miles below the fork) where he would have a more central position and better communications. He also referred to his letter of May 30 in which he informed the marquis that he would march to join Greene at the first opportunity unless he received orders to the contrary.[8]

About ten o'clock word came that the enemy was marching down the right bank of the Rivanna and was now about four miles above the fork. The Baron therefore sent Captain Fairlie to call in the pickets. Fairlie accomplished his mission but was himself captured by the enemy. By noon, Simcoe's troops arrived at Point of Fork where Steuben observed them from the opposite shore. He now decided to march southward during the night. He sent Captain Kirkpatrick to Governor Nash of North Carolina with notice of his approach and a request for the clothing and equipment that Virginia could not provide for her recruits.[9] During the afternoon, the removal and concealment of the state's military property continued, but at dusk some articles still remained near the bank of the river. After nightfall the Baron withdrew with his recruits and a small body of militia, under Lawson, to a position near Willis Creek. Soon after dawn, he set out for the south, after sending three couriers by different routes to Lafayette.

4

STEUBEN'S departure was none too soon. A few hours later, Tarleton had returned from Charlottesville and was across the Rivanna from Simcoe. The following day, Cornwallis had his whole army assembled on the north shore of the James a few miles below Point of Fork. Had the Baron waited another day, Cornwallis could easily have overtaken him. Simcoe tells us that the Baron was safe from pursuit because the river was in flood; but he confutes this himself when he says that, in less than four hours, he made a float big enough to carry one hundred and thirty men. There was lumber enough for a dozen such floats in the houses and fences and tobacco barns at Governor Jefferson's plantation and other farms along the river.

On the morning of the sixth, Simcoe was surprised to find no sign of the Americans on the south shore. One of his men swam across and procured a boat. He then sent over a small detachment to secure the military property still exposed at the landing. Some articles were taken for his troops, others were destroyed and the rest thrown in the river. A mounted patrol also verified the fact that the Baron was well on his way southward. Simcoe tells us that Steuben might easily have defended the military stores at Point of Fork if he had not retreated so precipitately. He does not tell us that had he stopped to fight, he must have played into the enemy's hands. Steuben might have held off Simcoe alone, but he must have been outnumbered eventually. He had already saved all the state property that could be saved without risking the total loss of his detachment with all its arms and equipment.

Simcoe also tells us that he frightened Steuben away by a stratagem. He disposed his troops for such a distance along the shore that he made the Baron believe that the whole army of Cornwallis had arrived at Point of Fork. Light-Horse Harry Lee improves on this story by affirming that on the night of the fifth, Simcoe covered the hills with enough campfires for the whole British Army and that this put the Baron to flight before daybreak. Unfortunately for this story, the Baron's dispatches to Governor Nash and others make it clear that long before nightfall on the fifth he had calmly and correctly appraised the situation and had decided that it was his duty to withdraw. It was his primary mission to reënforce Greene. To remain at

Point of Fork to guard state property, or for any other purpose, would jeopardize the execution of that mission.

5

NORTH gives us an incident of the retreat from Point of Fork which throws light on the Baron's temper and his attitude toward the civil authority:

> . . . The Corps was on the point of marching to Carolina. A good looking man rode up . . . and introducing himself to the Baron, informed him that he had brought a recruit.*
>
> "I thank you, Sir," said the Baron, "with all my heart. He has arrived in a happy moment. Where is he, Colonel?"—For the man was a colonel in the militia.
>
> "Here, Sir," ordering his boy to dismount. The Baron's countenance altered. A sergeant was ordered to measure the lad whose shoes, when off, discovered something by which his height had been increased. The Baron patted the child's head with a hand trembling with rage and asked him how old he was. He was very young, quite a child.
>
> "Sir," said the Baron, . . . "You think me a rascal?"
>
> "Oh, no, Baron, I don't."
>
> "Then, Sir, I think you are one, an infamous scoundrel, thus to attempt to cheat your country. Take off this fellow's spurs. Place him in the ranks and tell General Greene from me, Colonel Gaskins,† that I have sent him a man able to serve, instead of an infant whom he would basely have made his substitute. Go, my boy, carry the Colonel's horses and spurs to his wife. Make my respects to her and tell her that her husband has gone to fight as an honest citizen should, for the liberty of his country . . ."
>
> Colonel Gaskins, fearing the consequences, let the man escape on the arrival of the regiment at Roanoke river. Nor was he tardy in applying . . . for redress.[10] . . .

In introducing this anecdote, North aptly observes: "Nor did the Baron's zeal permit him, on every occasion, to act with the mildness and caution, proper to be observed by military commanders in the service of a Republic."

---

* Under the Virginia draft law, any citizen who brought in a Continental recruit was entitled to a bounty and an exemption from militia duty.

† Colonel Gaskins was the battalion commander.

6

THE Baron marched rapidly southward. At first he expected that Cornwallis would send troops in pursuit. On the tenth he halted at Cole's Ferry, about seventy miles from Point of Fork. There, on the twelfth, he finally learned that Greene had expected him to remain in Virginia. This information came indirectly, but clearly in a letter from General Sumner of North Carolina. Sumner was surprised to learn from Kirkpatrick that Steuben was marching away from Virginia. He therefore wrote: ". . . My last instructions from General Greene were, as soon as equipped, should Lord Cornwallis' route be to the northward, to join you and the army acting there.[11] . . ." The Baron read this letter with chagrin. It was now apparent that Greene expected him to remain in Virginia with his Continental recruits. And now, here he was, marching away from the decisive theater of war, while the North Carolina levies were preparing to march to his support! Technically, his position was correct for he had obeyed his last orders from Greene. But he must have regretted keenly that he did not ignore them when the situation that inspired them had so obviously changed. Had he assumed the responsibility of remaining to support Lafayette, most of the recent friction between him and the state authorities might have been avoided. Their reluctance to send Virginia's military resources to the Carolinas was now justified by the event. It was unpleasant to reflect that in appraising the real demands of the military situation, the politicians had been right and the general wrong. Nor was the Baron's chagrin relieved when his own staff officer, Captain Kirkpatrick, wrote him from North Carolina: ". . . The gentlemen here think it very extraordinary the troops should march out of Virginia at a time when all the enemy's force is there.[12] . . ."

After digesting the news from North Carolina, the Baron decided to return toward the James. He arrived at Prince Edward Court House on the thirteenth. About this time he learned that Lafayette had been reënforced by Wayne and was returning toward the James Valley; and that Cornwallis was moving down the north bank of the river toward Richmond. Word came from Lafayette around the fifteenth:

> . . . I request, my dear Sir, you will immediately return this way and with the Continentals and militia under your command, hasten to form a junction with us. I am afraid Genl Greene's letter requesting you to remain with us has not got to hand.[18] . . .

The Baron had anticipated Lafayette's request by several days. In fact, he had taken up the return march before the marquis wrote his letter. On the sixteenth he arrived at Carter's Ferry on the James, and on the nineteenth reported to Lafayette at Colonel Dandridge's, about twenty-two miles northwest of Richmond.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SCAPEGOATS

1

WHILE the Baron was fleeing southward, the government of Virginia was fleeing westward. It will be recalled that when Cornwallis sent Simcoe to Point of Fork to capture Steuben, he also sent Tarleton to Charlottesville to capture Governor Jefferson and the legislature. Tarleton proceeded with great speed and secrecy, but news of his approach reached Charlottesville just in time for the governor and most of the legislators to escape. The fugitive statesmen did not stop until they got to Staunton beyond the mountains. There, after catching their breath, they established a temporary capital.

When they reassembled at Staunton, they were in a chastened mood. As military legislators, their success had not been brilliant. Therefore, as chastened legislators frequently do, they sought a scapegoat in the executive branch of the government. Jefferson's term as governor had just expired, so on June 12, they elected General Thomas Nelson as his successor; and on the same day they "*Resolved,* that at the next session of the Assembly, an inquiry be made into the conduct of the Executive of the state for the last twelve months."

The elimination of Jefferson was an important military reform. Great as he was in other fields, we must accept his own admission that he was an ineffective war governor.[1] In his autobiography he wrote:

> From a belief that under the pressure of invasion under which we were then laboring, the public would have more confidence in a military chief, and that the military commander, being vested with the civil power also, both might be wielded with more energy, promptitude and effect for the defense of the state, I resigned the

administration at the end of my second year and General Nelson was appointed to succeed me.[2]

But Jefferson's renunciation came too late to do much good. By this time, the military resources of Virginia were dissipated and exhausted beyond recovery. Nelson labored with intelligence and industry but even the best administration cannot recall lost opportunity. If he had become war governor only one year earlier, how different the story must have been! He would have welcomed Steuben's expert advice even as Washington had welcomed it. He would not have suffered from the antipathy that the doctrinaire feels for the practical soldier. An inexpensive little fortress at Hoods would have protected the upcountry from surprise attack. It would have been impossible for Benedict Arnold to insult the proud Old Dominion by capturing her capital with a paltry 900 troops and without the loss of a man. Cornwallis could never have invaded Virginia, if her available military resources had been organized for the support of Greene in the Carolinas.

2

HAVING eliminated Jefferson, the statesmen soon found another and more acceptable scapegoat. Steuben was already unpopular before the incident at Point of Fork. But when word came to the shame-faced legislators that the Baron had run away from Simcoe almost as fast as they had run away from Tarleton, the clamor against him became unanimous. The loss of military stores was greatly exaggerated. It was charged that he had fled from an inferior force. His flight had been sheer panic and could only have been inspired by cowardice. Even the Baron's friends who knew the facts were unable to quiet the clamor against him. As Davies wrote to Greene:

> . . . The Baron has however become universally unpopular, and all ranks of people seem to have taken the greatest disgust at him. . . . A very little, however, has raised all this Clamour; but at all events his usefulness is entirely over. . . .[3]

In the meantime the popular version of the Point of Fork incident came to Lafayette. On June 18, the day before Steuben's return, he wrote to Washington:

> . . . The Conduct of the Baron, my dear General, is to me unintelligible. Every man, woman and child in Virginia is Roused against him. They dispute even on his courage. But I cannot believe their accusations. I must however confess that He Had 500 and odd new levies and some militia; that he was on the other side of a River which the freshet rendered very difficult to cross particularly by people that had no Boats; that the greatest part of the accounts make Simcoe 400 strong. Half of them dragoons; that our Stores on the South Side of the River were destroyed by 30 or 40 men; that the Baron went to Staunton River about 70 miles from Point of Fork. . . . General Lawson and every officer and Soldier Both in the Regulars and Militia are so much exasperated against the Baron and cover him with so many Ridicules that after I have obtained a junction with Him, I do not know where to employ him without giving offense. . . .

A few days after the Baron's return, Lafayette received a resolution of the House of Delegates requesting him to make an official investigation into the conduct of all persons concerned in the loss of stores at the Point of Fork.[4] But by this time the marquis had heard the other side of the story. He now appreciated that the Baron's retreat was justified by his conception of his duty under the last orders he had received from Greene. He also knew that many of the articles at first reported lost had been recovered—some from the river, some from the woods where the Baron had concealed them and some from thieving settlers in the neighborhood. All this threw a new light on the original version that he had received from Steuben's enemies. The stress of military operations gave him no time to make a formal report, but his later conclusions appear as follows:

> [From letter to Washington, June 28.]
>
> . . . The old arms at the Point of Fork have been taken out of the water: The cannon has [had] been Thrown in the river when

they [the enemy] marched back to Richmond; So that his Lordship did us no harm of any consequence. . . .

[From letter to Steuben, Oct. 26.]

. . . In the beginning of the campaign I considered you and the new levies as belonging to the Carolina Army. The letters in which General Greene and myself were positive for joining me had been intercepted by the enemy: . . . Your movements at that moment must have been directed by the intelligence you received and what you conceived to be General Greene's intentions.[5]

[From Lafayette's *Précis de la Campagne de 1781.*]

. . . Another detachment moved against the Port of Fork, where General Steuben was drilling six or seven hundred recruits; he evacuated that position believing that his orders required him to withdraw in the direction of Carolina. Some stores of no great consequence were destroyed.

3

STEUBEN remained with the army in the field for several weeks. During this time Cornwallis slowly withdrew from Richmond to Williamsburg. Early in July the Baron was taken sick. On the twenty-third he wrote to Peters:

> . . . Fatigue of body and mind and the hot climate, so unfavorable for my bilious temperament, have so affected my health, that about two weeks ago, I was obliged to withdraw and take treatment for a skin eruption which became quite serious. With the consent of the marquis I have come to a country house near Colonel Walker's [not far from Charlottesville]. . . . His father is my doctor.

The invalid then unbosoms himself to his old friend: "I have seen so many atrocious villainies since I have been in this state that I can no longer be surprised at anything." He complains that he has been blamed for not giving battle at Point of Fork to the whole army of Cornwallis with 450 men, "more ragamuffins than soldiers." He will be able to defend himself, but in justifying his own conduct he will "be forced to expose the dastardliness of the government, the absurdity of the laws and the pusillanimity of those who should have executed them." When his health is restored he will join the Southern army. After the campaign, "I will come to see you for your advice on my business affairs in Europe which, after four years absence, demand my attention. . . . My respects to Mad. Peters and my tender compliments to my aides-de-camp.[6] . . ." The Baron's recovery was slow. On August 13 he wrote to Greene:

> I have received your favor of the 19th of July, in which I am ordered to join you. If it had pleased God, my dear General, that this order had reached me some months sooner, I should have escaped a great deal of pain and chagrin. . . . My duty and inclination would have engaged me to set out immediately on the receipt of your letter, had not my ill state of health prevented me. . . . The heat of the season, uneasiness of mind and a thousand other things have so used me up that I cannot yet sustain the fatigues of a journey. I shall however, prepare to take up my line of march the last of this month. . . . I can say nothing to you on our affairs, either political or military; a sick man, you know, looks on things worse than they really are.[7] . . .

CHAPTER XXXIX

YORKTOWN

1

THE Baron never made his journey to the Carolinas. Early in September he set out to join the marquis in the final campaign against Cornwallis. On the ninth he wrote to Ben Walker* from Williamsburg:

> . . . Everything was ready for my departure to the South when an attack of gout compelled me to postpone my departure for a few days. On the 3d, I received a letter from the Marquis informing me that the French fleet with a corps of 4000 troops was in the Bay and that he would be charmed to see me at his headquarters. My gout was cured at once. . . .
>
> Yesterday I arrived at this place where I found the French army camped with ours† about a mile from the college. Our lines are advanced to within 4 miles of York which the enemy holds in strength, making intrenchments at York and Gloucester. . . . I do not doubt but that Cornwallis is prepared for a vigorous defense, but the advantages for the moment are on our side. It will be a miracle if he escapes. If he saves himself from this, Cornwallis will be immortal in his fatherland. . . .
>
> . . . I have not seen the Marquis. He is sick and can see nobody. . . . Our friend, North, was taken the same way on the road. I was hardly able to bring him here in a carriage. He has a very high fever.[1] . . .

2

ON September 14, Washington and Rochambeau arrived at Williamsburg in advance of the troops from the North. Steuben immediately resumed his duties as inspector general. On the nineteenth, he described the situation before Yorktown to Greene:

---

* Walker had gone to Philadelphia in August.

† Here Steuben refers to Lafayette's troops—about 3,500 Continentals (including the new Virginia levies) and about 3,500 militia. The French under Saint Simon numbered about 8,200.

> . . . Everything is preparing for our grand enterprise, and as far as we have gone, fortune seems to have seconded all of our endeavors. The Count de Grasse's fleet has formed a junction with that of Barras before the face of Graves and Hood. . . . Cornwallis is fortifying himself like a brave general who must fall; but I think he will fall with honor. . . . Our troops and those of our allies, from the North, are expected every hour. They embarked at Baltimore on the 15th instant. As soon as they arrive our operations will commence. This, my dear General, is the decisive moment, the happiest time I have spent in America.[2] . . .

On September 25, the Northern troops arrived and began to disembark.* Washington now ordered the reorganization of the American Army. It was formed with three divisions to be commanded by Lincoln, Lafayette and Steuben. The Baron's division comprised the brigades of Wayne and Gist. After his troubles in Virginia, he was greatly elated by this assignment. On the twenty-eighth, the whole army moved forward to within two miles of Yorktown. By the thirtieth Cornwallis was completely invested. On that day, we find from the order book that "Barron Steuben" was the "Maj^{r} Gen^{l} of the Day." At the end of another week, most of the siege guns were in place and everything was in readiness for the bombardment of Yorktown.

Steuben's assignment to the command of troops in the decisive campaign of the war was a distinguished honor. In the face of the clamor against him in Virginia, it was a formal token of Washington's confidence. Greene had written to Washington on September 17:

> . . . Baron Steuben seems to have got into some kind of disgrace, and I believe it without cause. I wish your Excellency would write

---

* Washington was able to bring only 2,000 Continentals with him. This left scarcely 4,000 to guard the forts in the Highlands. Rochambeau's detachment numbered about 4,000. He had left Newport in July and had joined Washington on the Hudson. After the concentration at Williamsburg, the allied army numbered about 7,000 French, 5,500 Continentals and 3,500 militia. Cornwallis had about 7,500 officers and men.

> him a letter to console him, as he appears by his letters to feel sensibly upon the occasion. . . .

To this Washington replied on October 6 after appraising the Virginia situation with his own eyes:

> . . . The Baron from the warmth of his temper had got disagreeably involved with the State, and an inquiry into a part of his conduct must one day take place, both for his own honor and their satisfaction. I have for the present given him a command in this army which makes him happy. . . .

3

IN Washington's general orders of October 6 there are fifty-five paragraphs giving detailed instruction for the conduct of siege operations. This technical manual for the instruction of the army was probably prepared under Steuben's supervision. With his staff experience under Frederick the Great in the Seven Years' War, there was no officer in the whole allied army so well qualified to advise the commander in chief on the elaborate technique of fortress warfare. The order for this day also contained a less technical paragraph directing the issue of one gill of rum to each private soldier and one week's allowance of spirits to each officer. With reference to the officers, the order specified: "Those who neglect sending proper returns will have only themselves to blame if they lose their dividend on this occasion." The order further prescribed that the issue would be made "this afternoon at three o'clock near Gen^{l} Steuben's marquee." We may therefore assume that the Baron and his official family did not lose their "dividend."

During the night of the sixth the first parallel was opened by Lincoln's division within six hundred yards of the enemy's works. It was strengthened by Lafayette's division on the seventh and by Steuben's division on the eighth. On the afternoon of the ninth the heavy bombardment commenced. By the tenth the fire was so intense that the enemy withdrew his guns from the embrasures and scarcely fired a shot during the day.

We have a glimpse of the trenches at that time from the Baron's own pen:

> Baron Vioménil commanded in the trenches on October 10th. At four o'clock in the evening he sent Count Deuxponts to tell me that he had observed, while visiting the trenches, that my division was extremely weak, and as it was probable the enemy might make a sortie that night, he wished to reenforce my left wing with from five to eight hundred men, if I should think it necessary. In presence of General Wayne I answered Count Deuxponts that I did not think I wanted any reenforcements, and that if the enemy should attack me, I should answer for being able to hold the battery until the Baron de Vioménil could arrive to support me, and, further, that in case he was attacked, he might rely on me to support him with eight hundred men in two columns.
>
> When Count Deuxponts had gone away, Wayne remarked that I had only one thousand men in my entire division. "No doubt of it" I replied, "that is my calculation too. But if it should so happen, I should, on my own responsibility, leave two hundred men to defend the battery, and with the remaining eight hundred men attack forthwith in two columns." I added that if I was guilty of a certain amount of gasconade with regard to the number of my men, it was for the honor of his country, whereupon Wayne took me by the hand, and addressing himself to the officers present, said: "Now, gentlemen, it is our duty to make good the exaggeration of Baron Steuben and to support him just as if he had double the number of troops that he has."[8]

4

THACHER gives us another glimpse of Steuben and Wayne during the siege of Yorktown:

> While on this duty, the Baron perceiving himself in danger from a shell thrown from the enemy, threw himself suddenly into the trench. General Wayne in the jeopardy of the moment fell on him. The Baron turning his eyes, saw it was his brigadier: "I always knew you were a brave general," said he, "but I did not know you were so perfect in every point of duty. You cover your general's retreat in the best manner possible."

And here is another picture from Garden's *Revolutionary Anecdotes:*

> During the siege of Yorktown, Baron Steuben [was] giving a breakfast to several of the Field Officers of the Army. In the course of the entertainment, while festivity was at its height, . . . a shell from the enemy fell into the center of the circle formed by his guests. There was no time for retreat; to fall prostrate on the earth afforded the only chance of escape; every individual stretched himself at his length; the shell burst with tremendous explosion, covering the whole party with mud and dirt, which rather proved a source of merriment than serious concern, since none of the party sustained any further inconvenience.

Steuben's division was again assigned to the trenches on the eleventh. During this tour of duty, he opened the second parallel at a distance of about three hundred yards from the enemy. The night of the fourteenth the enemy's two advanced redoubts were carried by assault, one by a French column under Deux-ponts and the other by a column of American light infantry under Alexander Hamilton. On the morning of the seventeenth Cornwallis sent a flag to Washington proposing that commissioners be appointed to fix terms for the surrender of his army. On the nineteenth his troops marched out and laid down their arms. Steuben's division was again in the trenches when the royal standard was hauled down. According to North:

> . . . It was during the Baron's tour in the trenches that the negotiations respecting the capitulation commenced. At the relieving hour the next morning, the Marquis de Lafayette approached with his division—The Baron refused to be relieved, assigning as a reason, the etiquette in Europe, that as he had, during his guard, received the first overtures, it was a point of honor to remain on his post till the capitulation was signed or broken. The Marquis applied to the Commander-in-Chief, but the Baron, with his troops remained in the trenches until the British flag was struck.[4]

Washington's congratulatory order of October 20 especially commends the three division commanders, Lincoln, Lafayette and Steuben.

5

THE Baron wrote to Greene on November 5 that he would be unable to join the Southern army:

> Pity me then, my dear General, when I assure you that I am prevented from following my Duty & inclination by extreme Indigence—an utter incapacity of any longer supporting myself & family.
>
> Hitherto I have supported myself by drawing on account so much paper money as served to subsist my family in a manner which you know was not magnificent. The real value of what I have drawn during a year that I have been in Virginia, I am certain does not exceed 150 Guineas.* I have lost three of my own Horses & have been obliged to purchase others at an enormous price and my camp equipage after 18 months campaign is nearly destroyed.
>
> When General Washington arrived here Paper money had no longer a Currency and I was in hopes that Congress had provided some means of furnishing us with a little hard money. I asked only a months pay but it was not to be had & I am ashamed to say that I was reduced to the necessity of selling my silver forks to subsist one of my aids whom I left sick at this place. When I sat myself down with the Army before York I had no other prospect but of living on my Rations as a Soldier & had it not been for the worthy General Knox who lent me five half Joes,† I should not have had a mouthful to have given in the trenches to my companions in misery. This circumstance which I shall never forget, so affected me that I determined as soon as the Siege was over to lay my case before the General. I did so. He seemed affected & offered, indeed insisted on my accepting 20 Guis [guineas] from his private Purse, but could give me no hopes of any future alteration.
>
> Under these Circumstances, my Dear General, I must necessarily quit. I have obtained a permission to go to Philadelphia to settle my accounts with Congress. After four years fatiguing service it is right I should know on what footing I stand. If I have merited nothing I am content. My pay they will not dispute.

---

* The records of the pay office show that during this year he had drawn about $220,000 in paper money.

† The "Joe" was a Portuguese gold coin worth between eight and nine dollars.

I do not pretend to any superior prerogative over my Brother Officers but there are circumstances with respect to me which I think merit some consideration.

The Citizen of America if he suffers can reflect that it is for the Liberties of his country, for his wife, his children, indeed for all that is dear to man. The subject of France waits his reward from his king who in every instance has shown a disposition amply to reward the services of his Subjects in America. Neither of these cases apply to me. I am a stranger in the Country. I sacrifice my time, my Interest & my Health & what is more than all these, I risk a reputation gained by twenty seven years service in Europe. I must still add to this the sacrifice of the little property I have left or perish for want in the Country I am endeavoring to Serve.

Such, my Dear General, is my situation. As a Friend I communicate it to you. It is not exaggerated. Am I wrong to complain or can you blame me for quitting when all my Zeal, & without Vanity, I may say my Military Experience, is attended with so little success & procures me so little Satisfaction?

I go then my D^r General uncertain if ever I shall have the happiness of seeing you again.[5] . . .

On the back of this letter there is an endorsement apparently in General Greene's handwriting: "A terrible picture of the Rewards of Long Service—An affecting letter."

6

GARDEN in his *Revolutionary Anecdotes* gives a characteristic glimpse of the Baron in his poverty after the surrender of Cornwallis:

. . . After the capture of Yorktown, the superior officers of the allied army, vied with each other in acts of civility and attention to the captive Britons. Lord Cornwallis and his family were particularly distinguished. Entertainments were given in succession by all of the Major Generals, with the exception of Baron Steuben. He alone withheld an invitation. . . . Poverty denied the means of displaying that liberality towards them, which had been shown by others. Such was his situation, when calling on Col. Stewart, and informing him of his intention to entertain the British Commander-in-Chief, he requested that he would advance him a sum of money as the price of his favorite charger. . . .

Colonel Stewart to prevent a step that he knew must be attended with great loss, and still greater inconvenience, immediately tendered his purse, recommending, should the sum it contained be insufficient, the sale or pledge of his watch.

"My dear friend," said the Baron, " 'tis already sold. Poor N. [North] was sick and wanted necessaries. . . . The trifle it brought is set apart for his use. My horse must go, so no more, I beseech you, to win me from my purpose. I am a Major General in the Service of the United States, and my private inconvenience must not be put in the scale with the duty my rank calls upon me imperiously to perform!"

North also tells us:

> At York or Williamsburgh he sold such part of his camp equipage brought from Europe, as was saleable. "We are constantly feasted by the French" said he, "without giving them a bit of *bratwurst*, I can stand it no longer. I will give one grand dinner to our allies, should I eat my soup with a wooden spoon for ever after. . . ." On the eve of returning to the northward, he said to a sick aid-de-camp [North himself]: "I must go. I must leave you, my Son. . . . The instant you are able, quit this deleterious situation. There is my sulkey, and here a half what I have. God bless you. I can say no more." Nor could he. . . . A journey of 300 miles was before him. His wealth was a single piece of gold! Are other instances necessary to prove the texture of his heart?[6] . . .

7

BEFORE Steuben left for the North, he learned that after his retreat from Point of Fork the Assembly of Virginia had passed resolutions reflecting on his conduct and calling upon Lafayette, as the commander in Virginia, to make an official investigation. This information reached the Baron indirectly, as the marquis had never brought the matter to his attention. He therefore wrote to Governor Nelson:

> . . . As my duty at present calls me Northward, . . . I have to ask of your Excellency to inform me by an official letter if Gov-

> ernment have any Complaint against me since I have had the honor of serving in Virginia, that if there should be any I may justify myself. A reputation acquired during 27 years Service authorizes me in this point of delicacy.[7]

The Baron received no reply to this letter. Later, when he learned that Benjamin Harrison had become governor, he wrote to him: ". . . I must therefore repeat the same request to you, Sir, that I may have an opportunity of justifying myself not only to the State of Virginia but to the world.[8] . . ."

To this Governor Harrison replied:

> The resolutions of the last assembly respecting the loss of the stores at the Point of Fork were sent to the Marquis Lafayette, who informed the present assembly by Letter that he had been too much engaged to enter on the inquiry for which he beg'd their excuse. There the matter rests and I dare say will not be again taken up.[9]

While the Baron was thus denied an opportunity to vindicate his military administration in Virginia, Greene always gave him full credit for his support of the Southern army. On October 25 he wrote:

> . . . I shall ever acknowledge my obligations to you for your efforts to serve me, nor will the malice of your enemies induce me to think unfavorably of you. I know your merit and am fully persuaded of your integrity.[10] . . .

CHAPTER XL

FINANCES AND AIR CASTLES

1

STEUBEN spent the winter of 1781–82 in Philadelphia. There he was cordially welcomed as one of the heroes of Yorktown. But there appears to be a bit of embroidery in his own account of his reception. He wrote to his old Hechingen friend, Hoeffel, that all the church bells were rung in his honor; that he received deputations from the government, the municipality, the Academy of Sciences and the University; that Congress thanked him publicly for his services in Virginia and that Virginia had expressed her gratitude in a concession of 25,000 acres of land.

Early in January, his money accounts were audited by the treasurer, Robert Morris. Since his entry into the service his pay and allowances had amounted to $13,508. Against this from time to time he had drawn $385,495 in Continental and Virginia money. Notwithstanding these imposing drafts "on account," it was found that the government still owed him more than $8,500 in real money. But he was not permitted to draw this whole sum in cash. Under a special regulation that applied to all foreign officers, he was given one fifth in cash, the balance being left "in the funds" at 6 per cent interest. Under this arrangement he received $1,715.23 in specie and a Treasury Certificate for $6,850.[1] This was a negotiable obligation of the United States, but the Baron tells us in one of his memorials that he was unable to sell it for ten cents on the dollar.

It was while the Baron was reluctantly making his forced investment in the securities of the United States that he wrote his letter to Hoeffel. A few excerpts will show how his imagination gave him escape from the trials of reality:

> . . . Last week I put 6,800 Spanish crowns (48,000 francs) in the

State Bank at 6 per cent. This amount was saved from my pay. So you see I am not lacking in . . . the good things of this life. . . .

. . . I possess so much land that, if I wish, I can sell it after the peace for £50,000 sterling. . . .

. . . The account that I live in as great style as one of the chief princes of the Empire is somewhat exaggerated. I live more as a good Republican than a German Baron. My table is simple. I have no unnecessary servants. . . . But with my saddle horses I have indeed been extravagant. I have twelve, and even I must confess that five of them are beautiful animals. . . . But I cannot describe my favorite. She is a blue-gray mare, sixteen hands high, the most beautiful animal I have ever seen.* . . . She cost me 130 louis d'or in gold. . . . I would gladly pay twice her price if I could place her in our worthy prince's stables. . . . For a long time I have expected from Chancellor Frank, a statement of my debts in Hechingen. Please try in my name to get him to send it.†[2] . . .

The Baron's old friends at Hechingen were proud of his success in America. About this time the Prince of Hohenzollern concluded a letter to him: ". . . Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have news of your Excellency again soon. I take sincere interest in you and remain with attachment, etc."

2

ON January 10 Congress passed a resolution reorganizing the inspector general's department under a new plan prepared by Steuben and approved by Washington. Two weeks later the Baron suffered a great loss in his official family. Washington commandeered his ablest staff officer, and made Ben Walker his own aide-de-camp. February 28, Steuben wrote to Washington that his living expenses and the demands of his more pressing creditors had exhausted his $1,700:

. . . So long as my slender fortune permitted, I drew bills of Exchange at a loss of 38 & 40 P^{r} Cent. I borrowed Money from my

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* This animal, famous in her day as "The Blueskin Mare," was not a figment of the Baron's imagination. See page 372 n.

† According to Zingeler the Baron subsequently paid his Hechingen debts.

> friends to afford me a decent support. . . . I am bound to travel from one Army to the other, to live at double the expense in Taverns in which I have to pay ready Money not only for my personal expenses, but also for the entertainment of my Aids de Camp and the Horses necessary to perform our journeys. . . .

Washington accordingly wrote to Morris[3] in the Baron's behalf and he was paid $937.81* in cash. This reduced his balance in the Treasury to $6,000.

3

ON March 22 Washington set out for his headquarters at Newburgh. The Baron left Philadelphia at about the same time but traveled more slowly as he was engaged in troop inspection on the way. On April 15, shortly after his arrival at Newburgh, he, with the other generals, was directed to submit a plan for an attack upon the British in New York. Since the surrender of Cornwallis, Washington had been eager to capture the remnant of the British Army before it could be reënforced. As usual, however, he lacked the essential means. The army was weaker in numbers than ever before. As late as May 4, he wrote to the thirteen governors that not one penny of the year's levy had been paid by any state. With the English fleet controlling New York Harbor, there could be no chance of success unless the French should again secure naval superiority. This slender hope disappeared when news came that Rodney had defeated De Grasse in the West Indies.

The difficulties of the situation were pointed out by Steuben and the other generals. But Washington did not relinquish his purpose until the preliminaries of peace were signed. Opportunity might be remote, but should it come he would be ready with every resource under his own control. Among these were the efficiency and discipline of his little army. Here Steuben was his principal instrument of success. In his general order of June 18, Washington wrote:

---

* Eight hundred and fifty dollars from his funded Treasury credit and $87.81 in interest.

> . . . The review of the Army by Brigades being now completed, the Commander in Chief is happy in having this opportunity to present his thanks to Maj. Gen. the Baron Steuben for the indefatigable assiduity and singular attention exhibited in the late inspections and reviews and for his eminent services in promoting the discipline of the army on all occasions. . . .

4

Soon after rejoining the army, the Baron was again in need of money. As Congress had recently reduced the major general's subsistence allowance from fifteen to five rations, he was no longer able to run his mess by bartering surplus rations for services and supplies. The quartermaster had no money to buy forage and Steuben was compelled, at his own expense, to feed the animals he used in the public service. He also found it necessary to advance travel expense money to his assistants when he sent them to inspect distant detachments. Finally, on July 8, he wrote to Washington for leave to visit Philadelphia in order to make a settlement with Congress:

> . . . A Delicacy due to my own Feelings and a Regard to the Interest of the Cause I have drawn my sword in, obliges me to request that your Excellency would please to favor me with your sentiments in writing on the following questions:
>
> —Is the Department of Inspector General necessary in the Army, or is it not?
>
> —Has the Department been conducted during the Course of five years agreeable to your Wishes?
>
> —Have the Circumstances resulting from my Exertions as Chief of the Department answered your Expectations? . . .

To this, Washington replied the next day:

> . . . I give it as my clear opinion that it has been of the utmost utility, and continues to be of the greatest importance, for reasons too obvious to need enumeration, but more especially for having established one uniform system of maneuvres and regulations in an Army composed of the Troops of Thirteen States (each having its local prejudices), and subject to constant interruptions and

deviations from the frequent changes & dissolutions it has undergone.

It is equally just to Declare that the Department, under your Auspices, has been conducted with an intelligence, activity & Zeal, not less beneficial to the Public than honorary to yourself, and I have had abundant reason to be satisfied with your abilities and attention to the duties of your Office during the four* Years you have been in the Service.

5

THE Baron had several matters to bring to the attention of Congress. Of the money due him prior to January 1, $6,000 were still held in the Treasury. Only $500 of the $1,500 due him since that date had been paid him. His monthly expense allowance of $84 was entirely inadequate. If he was to continue in the discharge of his duties, he must have his future pay promptly and his expense allowance must be increased. But there was another question of still greater importance. Should America win her independence, he would be entitled to the benefits of the understanding which Congress had made with him when he entered the American service. Under its terms he would be entitled to compensation for the revenues he relinquished in Europe and to a suitable reward.† As the peace now pending would soon establish American independence, the time had arrived when Congress should appraise the value of his sacrifices and services.

Though Steuben spent several weeks in Philadelphia his mission was unsuccessful. His friends in Congress were unable to procure him an adequate expense allowance. In fact, it was now discovered that the old allowance of $84 per month had been omitted in the current appropriations. This was restored, but only after the amount was reduced by amendment to $80. This was all that could be done at that time and Steuben's friends persuaded him to postpone further action until the end of the year's campaign. But the Treasury records show that he was permitted to draw $480 of his overdue pay in July and $320 more in November. This gave him some ready cash and enabled him to resume his practice of paying his official expenses from his private purse—until it was again empty.

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* With his characteristic inaccuracy as to dates and the lapse of time, the Baron had written "five years" in his letter.

† For the Baron's conception of his understanding with Congress, see pages 124, 125, *supra*.

Upon his return from Philadelphia, he resumed his labors with the army. All contemporary accounts pay tribute to its remarkable progress during the year under the supervision and guidance of the inspector general. When Rochambeau reviewed the troops before his departure for France, he was amazed at their improvement since he saw them last just after the surrender of Cornwallis. As the regiments marched by he exclaimed to Washington: "You must have formed an alliance with the King of Prussia. These troops are Prussians!"[4]

6

ABOUT the middle of November, after the army went into winter quarters, Steuben returned to Philadelphia. Following a conference with his friends in Congress, he wrote to Elias Boudinot, the president, on December 5:

> Sir: Five years are now completed since I have been in the service of the United States—After having abandoned honorable Commands & easye circumstances in Europe, to enter into that service. . . .
>
> My private resources being exhausted, I am constrained to ask the justice of your honorable body, & respectfully require of you to appoint a Committee to enquire into & report to you my Situation & pretensions.
>
> Altho' I have sacrificed my own interests, I shall be happy to convince your Committee that the interior administration in your Regiments & Corps which I have established, has produced the most important savings to the Public in men, arms, ammunition, accoutrements and Camp Equipage—the testimonials of the generals and other Officers of the Army, as well as the Chiefs of the Departments, will incontestibly verify this. . . . I dare assure you

> that your Enemies cannot oppose to you an Infantry equal to your own—You have Officers whose military knowledge equals their Courage, & soldiers both well instructed & obedient. 'Tis with this army you will be emboldened to look for a peace glorious to your Country, & productive of happiness to your posterity.
>
> When I drew my sword for the liberties of this country, it was with a determined resolution that nothing but death should make me sheathe it before G. Britain had acknowledged the independence of America—It depends upon Congress to remove the obstacles which will force me against my inclination to change this resolution. . . .[5]

This letter of December 5 replaced an earlier letter which the Baron took with him to Philadelphia in July. As the political situation was then unfavorable, he did not submit it at that time. In this earlier version he had written:

> . . . In the Year 1762 the King of Prussia to whom I had the Honor of acting as Aid-de-Camp, in Consideration of my Services, was pleased to present me with a Benefice in the Chapter of Havelsburg worth twelve Hundred and forty six Dollars, or Four Thousand nine Hundred and sixty french livres yearly. This in Consequence of my Resolution to serve in America, I resigned in the year 1776.
>
> In 1771 I was honored with an Appointment in the Empire, of Lieutenant General for the Circle of Suabia; and the same Year the Margrave or Prince of Baden created me Knight of the Order of Fidelity, and gave me the Command of all his Forces, with a Salary of two Thousand Florins, or four thousand french Livres. This also, an Ambition to serve in the Cause of Freedom easily prevailed on me to resign on the 2^{d} of July, 1776.
>
> These two Revenues which were Annuities for Life, amounting to two Thousand Dollars however considerable in themselves, I chearfully Sacraficed; prompted by a Desire to tender my services to America—Services resulting from forty Years Experience, which had procured me both Honor and Profit in my native Country.[6] . . .

When the Baron returned to Philadelphia in November, his lawyer friends advised him that it was unnecessary to describe his relinquished revenues in such minute detail. Why should he set up so clear a target for his opponents to shoot at? This led to the final letter of December 5 in which, as we have seen, the Baron contented himself with the more general and less assailable statement that he had "abandoned honorable Commands & easye circumstances in Europe." This final draft was probably written by Alexander Hamilton, who had recently entered Congress and who, thereafter, was the Baron's principal adviser. After rewriting the letter for his client, Hamilton apparently steered it through Congress, for it was promptly referred to a committee of three, with Hamilton himself as chairman.

7

THE committee conferred with the Baron, examined his testimonials, and reported on December 30:

> 1st, that the Baron de Steuben was in Europe possessed of respectable military rank, and different posts of honor and emolument, which he relinquished to come to America and offer his services at a critical period of the War, and without any previous Stipulations:
>
> 2dly. That on his arrival he actually engaged in the army, in a very disinterested manner, and without compensations similar to those which had been made to several other foreign officers:
>
> 3dly. That under singular difficulties and embarrassments . . . he has rendered very important and substantial services, by introducing into the army a regular formation and exact discipline, and by establishing a spirit of order and economy in the regiments; which, besides other advantages, have been productive of immense savings to the United States: . . . The Committee are therefore of an opinion that the sacrifices and services of the Baron de Steuben justly entitle him to the distinguished notice of Congress, and to a generous compensation, whenever the situation of public affairs will admit. . . .

While the committee was considering the Baron's case, there was a proposal in Congress to give him a lump sum of 10,000 guineas in satisfaction of his claims. But it was decided best to postpone such generous action in his behalf until all the other foreign officers should be discharged. In the meantime, however, Congress took steps to meet his immediate needs. Upon the recommendation of Hamilton's committee, he was granted a monthly expense allowance of $300 and was authorized to draw $2,400 from his funded balance in the Treasury.

8

WHILE the Baron was pressing his American claims, he also sought a substantial reward from the French monarchy. On December 30 he forwarded an elaborate memorial to Vergennes. In his letter of transmittal he wrote:

> . . . The time seems to approach when your labors will be crowned by a peace glorious to France and by the independence of America. You cannot forget the instruments whose services you have made use of to attain this important object.[7] . . .

In the memorial itself Steuben first gives a brief history of the affluent German officer of high rank who presented himself to Vergennes in 1777, just prior to his departure for America. This autobiographical sketch is similar to the one already given on pages 103–108. There are some differences as to dates, and in the Vergennes version the Baron promotes himself from lieutenant general to full general in the Baden service. After the autobiography, the memorialist continues:

> . . . Satisfied that the French Ministry is fully aware of the state of the American army at the time of his arrival, M. de Steuben flatters himself that after the reports of the Count de Rochambeau and the Chevalier de Chattelux, a comparison will assure him the approbation of the French court. The zeal and perseverance with which . . . he has surmounted every obstacle, the difficulty of conducting his operations . . . and lastly, the system which he has established, and the success which has followed it, are the titles on which he presumes to rest his claims to the favor and munificence of His Most Christian Majesty. . . . When the war shall have ceased . . . he hopes to finish his days in the dominions of His

> Majesty. He hopes to obtain from the United States of America an indemnity for the sacrifices he has made to enable him to enter into their service. This sum would almost reinstate him in the same situation he was in before he left Europe. Whom then can he look to for the reward of such a hazardous enterprise if it is not to that generous prince who has rewarded the least services rendered in this Revolution?[8] . . .

The Baron then specifies certain favors which he seeks from the French court. He asks that, after the war, he be given the honorary rank of major general (but without actual command) in the French Army. He also requests such an annuity as, added to the pension he expects from the Americans, will give him a life income of 20,000 livres. This, he says: "Will enable him to end his days at ease in the dominions of the King. . . . It will be the reward of an old soldier who has given his all to attain so interesting an object as the independence of America."

On the last day of the old year, 1782, we may imagine the Baron in an optimistic mood. His dreams of wealth were about to be realized. Yesterday, Congress had relieved his immediate distresses and would soon compensate him for the revenues he had sacrificed when he left Europe. There would also be a gratuity and a grant of land from each of thirteen grateful states. With his American affairs thus adjusted, he would bid an affectionate farewell to his comrades in arms and establish his home in Paris. There His Most Christian Majesty would increase his American pension to 20,000 francs and give him the uniform and decorations of a French major general. With this all settled, his actual wealth would soon exceed the fortune in expectancy which he had recently outlined to Bouvinghausen and Hoeffel. In these letters he had not prevaricated. He had simply anticipated reality by a few months.

CHAPTER XLI

PEACE AT LAST

1

THE Baron spent the winter on the outskirts of Philadelphia in a country house which he called Bellisarius Hall. North, who kept house with him, gives us a glimpse of their mode of living with some reflections of his own:

> . . . We are frequently in town but receive no pleasure. We dine & suspect. We dance & are tired, wish for solitude & retire to the country, are sick of ourselves & sigh for the noise & bustle of the city. We go. We return. This is a most infamous world. Would to God I was out of it. . . . Peace seems to be drawing near us. What will be the consequence of it I dont know. Whether troops will be kept up or disbanded, a monarchy or our present government—What will be the event nobody knows. Every one prays that we may have more wisdom than at present.[1]

But Washington was still chary of the allurements of peace. As late as February 16 he wrote from Newburgh:

> Dear Baron: . . . As the prospect of Peace (Tho' more promising than it has been at any former period) is somewhat equivocal, I have determined to put the Army, so far as depends on our exertions, in the most respectable state for active operations. . . . To effect this your presence and assistance will be of the greatest utility.

On receipt of this letter Steuben made haste to conclude his departmental business in Philadelphia. But when news came from Europe on March 12 that the preliminaries of peace had been signed, he postponed his departure for ten days and did not join the army until the end of the month. On April 6 Sir Guy Carleton, the British commander, wrote to Washington that the preliminaries of peace had been ratified and that he had orders from the King to proclaim a cessation of hostilities. Thereupon, without waiting for instructions from Congress, Washington ordered his outposts to suspend further acts of war.

2

On April 13 Washington received a letter from Hamilton informing him that a Committee of Congress desired his views on a permanent national defense system for the new-born republic. The following day he wrote to Steuben and each of his other generals requesting their views on this important question. In transmitting his reply the Baron wrote:

> . . . This I am certain of, that we have need of a regular force for the protection of our frontiers, that our militia ought to be on a regular footing and that the establishment of military schools & manufactories will be the best means for our security in future, and that a System of this nature will make us more respectable with the powers of Europe than if we keep up an army of fifty thousand men. . . .

The other generals expressed similar views on national military policy.[2] This remarkable unanimity of opinion was due to Steuben's influence. He was accepted by all his brother officers as an expert on military organization. They all frankly and generously recognized his handiwork in the efficiency of the Continental Army. It was therefore natural that they should respect his views on the type of peace establishment best suited to a modern republic. His papers in the New York Historical Society show that he was familiar with the Swiss Military System and that he had thought deeply on the practical problem of adapting that classical model to American conditions. The Quartermaster General, Pickering, frankly proposed that Steuben should be intrusted with the supervision and development of the proposed new peace establishment.

On May 1, after digesting the papers submitted by his generals, Washington transmitted his "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" to Congress. In this document he amplified the general policy outlined by Steuben in the excerpt quoted above. The plan was very simple. A great war had been won by the

Continental Army—an army of citizen soldiers drawn from the general body of the people. The militia should now be organized so that a new Continental Army could be drawn from it promptly in the event of future war. In order to accomplish this, a portion of the younger men in each community should be organized and trained in time of peace. This is what Washington meant when he proposed a "well regulated militia." He also agreed with Pickering that Steuben should be intrusted with the great constructive task of perpetuating the Continental Army. But as it was the prerogative of Congress to make specific nominations, he contented himself with the following transparent hint:

> . . . To produce the happy consequences which will attend a uniform system of service . . . I would beg leave to propose, that Congress should employ some able hand to digest a code of Military Rules and regulations, calculated immediately for the Militia and other Troops of the United States . . . and that an Inspector General should be appointed to superintend the execution of the proposed regulations in the several states. . . .

Where would Congress find the "able hand" to contrive and the "inspector general" to execute this great constructive plan so essential to the future security and dignity of the new Republic? There could be but one answer to that question. Every intelligent American of that day, in or out of Congress, would know to whom Washington referred.

In connection with military academies, Washington referred to a treatise on the subject which Steuben had recently prepared for the secretary of war.[3] The Baron proposed three military schools, one in New England, one in the Middle States and one south of the Potomac. These schools would diffuse military knowledge throughout the nation and educate leaders for the Continental Army of the future. Those who read Steuben's plan will find that it influenced the military authorities a generation later when a military academy was finally established at West Point.

Washington's "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" was considered by Hamilton's committee, but no constructive legislation was possible at that time. When Washington became President, he sought in vain to establish the same policy. If he had been able to charge Steuben with the perpetuation of the Continental Army, we should have been adequately prepared for all of our subsequent wars from the War of 1812 to the World War.

While the Baron was writing treatises on national defense and military education, he was also consulted by the Government on the discharge of the army, the disposition of prisoners of war, the care of disabled soldiers and other practical problems connected with the approaching demobilization. But lack of money defeated all of his constructive proposals. As Peters wrote him: ". . . An Empty Purse is a Bar to the Execution of the best Intentions. We have just under Consideration a plan for Establishing a Mint. All we want to put it in execution is the *Necessary Metal.*[4] . . ."

3

Now that the officers of the army faced their final separation, it was proposed by General Knox, with Washington's approval, that a hereditary military order should be formed to perpetuate their friendships, their services and sacrifices and the patriotic ideals for which they had fought. Out of this suggestion grew the Society of the Cincinnati. Steuben, as the senior officer present, presided at the preliminary meeting at Newburgh on May 10. Here, Knox's proposals were favorably received and a committee, under his chairmanship, was instructed to submit a complete plan. A second meeting was held on the thirteenth at the Baron's quarters—the Verplanck House near Fishkill Landing. Steuben again presided. The committee's plan was adopted and has been known ever since as the "Institution of the Society of the Cincinnati." Washington was elected the first president of the Society. But since Steuben presided at its early meetings, its first records bear his signature as president.[5]

Early in June the regiments marched away for discharge.

Both officers and men were in great distress. The government was unable to pay them and could give them only certificates for their arrears of pay and for the bonus of five years' pay recently authorized by Congress. The national credit was so low that these "interest-bearing bonds" had no cash value. They were not redeemed until many years later when they made fortunes for the speculators who had bought them up for a few cents on the dollar. North says:

> At the disbandment of the Revolutionary Army, when inmates of the same tent or hut for seven long years were separating, never, perhaps, to see each other's face again, grasping each other's hand in silent agony—cut adrift without hope—I saw his [the Baron's] strong endeavors to throw some rays of sunshine on the gloom. . . .
>
> To a stern old officer, a Lieut. Col. Cochran, . . . the Baron said all that could be said to soften distress. "For myself," said Cochran, "I care not—I can stand it; but my wife and daughters are in the garret of that wretched tavern. I know not where to carry them, nor have I the means for their removal." "Come my friend [said the Baron], I will pay my respects to Mrs. Cochran and your daughters if you please." And when he came away he left hope with them, and all he had to give.[6] . . .

Here is one of many tokens of regard and affection which the Baron received from the army at this time:

> The object for which we took upon us the profession of arms being accomplished, we are now about to retire from the Field & return to the Class of Private Citizens; but before we separate forever—permit us, the Officers of the two New York Regiments of Infantry to express our feelings towards you on this occasion.
>
> The essential and distinguished services you have rendered this Country, must inspire the breast of every Citizen of America with sentiments of gratitude & esteem, but we, Sir, feel sentiments of another nature. Your unremitted exertions on all occasions to alleviate the distresses of the Army—and the manner in which you have shared them with us, have given you more than a common title to the character of *our Friend*—as our Military Parent we

have long considered you.—Ignorant as we were of the profession we had undertaken, it is to your Abilities & unwearied assiduity, we are indebted for that Military Reputation we finally attained. We therefore feel ourselves bound to you by the strongest ties of affection, and we now take leave of you with that regret, which such sentiments must occasion.

Wishing you long to enjoy in health and happiness, those rewards which your services have merited & which a grateful people cannot fail to bestow, we have the honor to remain,[7]

Sir,
Your most Obed^{t}. and
Very hum
Servants.

[Here follow the signatures of the officers of the two regiments.]

4

ON July 12 Steuben was given an important diplomatic mission, as appears in Washington's letter of that date:

In consequence of the powers in me vested, I do hereby authorize & desire you to proceed . . . into Canada and there concert with General Haldimand or other British Commander-in-Chief in that province, upon all such measures as you shall find necessary for receiving possession of the posts now under his Command within the territory of the United States, and at present occupied by the troops of his Britannic Majesty. [Here follow general instructions, to arrange all details of the transfer, so that British garrisons in the Indian country should not be withdrawn until relieved by American troops.] . . . Having formed your Arrangements with General Haldimand, you will be pleased to proceed to . . . visit the several posts & fortresses on the frontier territory of the United States as far as Detroit; view their different situations, strength & Circumstances; and forming your judgment of their relative position and probable advantage to the States, you will report the same to me, with your Opinion of such of them as you shall think it most expedient for the States to retain and occupy. . . .

. . . At Detroit you will find a considerable settlement, consisting mostly of French people from Canada. To these you will

> please to intimate in the fullest manner the good disposition of Congress & the Inhabitants of the United States. . . .
>
> . . . Confiding perfectly in your general knowledge, good sense, judgment & Discretion in the fulfillment of this Commission, I forbear further Detail of Instructions; but wish you success in your negotiations with pleasure & Security in the prosecution of your Tour.

The Baron set out from West Point on July 20. He was accompanied by North and Lieutenant Colonel Villefranche, an accomplished French officer in the American service. On the twenty-third he was in Albany. There the city fathers, in extending him "The Freedom of the City," addressed him:

> . . . Among those, Sir, whom America's just cause induced to rank among her Defenders, She will always with Gratitude cherish the Remembrance of the Man who with unabating Perseverance has labored to form her Armies and who has so materially contributed to render them respectable for Discipline and Regularity.[8] . . .

From Albany, the Baron proceeded to Canada via Lake Champlain. His diplomatic mission was unsuccessful. He reached the "Springs of Saratoga" on his return journey on August 21, and being too ill to travel farther, wrote to Washington on the twenty-second:

> . . . I arrived at Chambly on the 2^{d} of August, from whence I sent Major North to announce my arrival. . . . According to General Haldimand's appointment, we met at Sorel, on the 8th, where I presented your Excellency's letter and opened the business on which I was sent. . . . General Haldimand replied that he had not received any orders for making the least arrangement for the evacuation of a single post . . . that, until he received positive orders for that purpose, he would not evacuate an inch of ground.
>
> I informed him that I was not instructed to insist on an immediate evacuation of the posts in question, but that I was ordered to demand a safe conduct to, & a liberty of visiting the posts on our Frontiers . . . that I might judge of the arrangements necessary to be made for securing the interests of the United States.

> To this he answered that the precaution was premature; that the Peace was not yet signed; that he was only authorized to cease hostilities, and that . . . he could not permit that I should visit a single post occupied by the British. . . .

This terminated the Baron's diplomatic mission. In fact, Great Britain did not relinquish Detroit, Fort Oswego, Fort Niagara and her other military posts in the territory of the United States until thirteen years later.

5

AFTER recuperating for a week or so at Saratoga, the Baron resumed his homeward journey. A letter from Miss Polly Duane gives us a glimpse of him on the way. Miss Polly wrote from her Grandfather Livingston's house, Livingston Manor, to her "dear Papa," James Duane:

> On Sunday Evening, the good old Baron with Colonel Willett and Majors Fish and North stopped here. . . . I was much pleased with the Baron. There seems to be so much candor & honesty in his composition (which is far more pleasing than all the tricks of Chesterfield without them).[9] . . .

It will be noted that Polly refers to Major North only casually. Neither she nor Billy knew that this was a fateful meeting for them. Neither of them knew then, that one day the "good old Baron" would make a match between them and that their first-born would be christened Frederick Steuben North.

After his return from Canada, the Baron was busy with matters concerning the demobilization of the army. He was especially charged by Washington with arrangements for the care of the sick and disabled soldiers who were too weak and destitute to be discharged. Because of the shortage of money this was a difficult task. With the aid of Robert Morris he was able to find hospital treatment for many of them. He also found means of transporting others to the little permanent garrison at West Point. When the English finally evacuated New York on November 25, Steuben was present in Washington's suite, taking an active part in the festivities that marked that final dramatic scene of the war. He was with the officers at Fraunces' Tavern at noon on December 4, when Washington filled a glass of wine and said: ". . . With an heart full of love and gratitude I now take leave of you; I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable."

But Washington's last farewell was for the Baron alone. On December 23, just before resigning his commission to Congress, he made it his last official act as commander in chief of the American armies to write the following letter:

Annapolis decr. 23^{d}, 1783.

My Dear Baron

Altho' I have taken frequent Opportunities both in public and private, of Acknowledging your great Zeal, Attention and Abilities in performing the duties of your Office; yet, I wish, to make use of this last Moment of my public Life, to Signify in the strongest terms, my intire Approbation of your Conduct, and to express my Sense of the Obligations the public is under to you for your faithful and Meritorious Services.

I beg you will be convinced, my dear Sir, that I should rejoice, if it could ever be in my power, to serve you more essentially, than by expressions of regard and Affection—but in the meantime, I am persuaded you will not be displeased with this farewell token of my Sincere Friendship and Esteem for you.

This is the last letter I shall ever write, while I continue in the Service of my Country—the hour of my Resignation is fixed at twelve this day—after which, I shall become a private Citizen on the Banks of the Potomack, where I shall be glad to embrace you, and testify the great Esteem and Consideration, with which,

I am My Dear Baron
Your most Obedt. and Affect'n
Servt.
G^{o} Washington.

No soldier in all history ever received a nobler recognition of faithful and meritorious service.

PART III

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN

CHAPTER XLII

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

1

UNTIL the autumn of 1783 the Baron expected to return to Europe after settling his American claims. In his petition to Vergennes he had pointed out that his services in the cause of American independence were also effective in furthering the policy of France. He therefore sought recognition and reward from His Most Christian Majesty and expressed his desire to end his days in his dominions as a retired major general in his army. These expectation were rudely shattered when Vergennes replied:

Versailles, July 21, 1783

I have received the letter you did me the honor to write the 30th [December*]—I have always taken the greatest part in your successes—You have rendered essential services to the United States, and I have no doubt of your reaping those rewards you have so much right to expect.

I have the honor to be, &c

De Vergennes.

Here was no recognition of any claim upon France and no invitation to the French court.

After his repudiation by Vergennes, the Baron decided to remain in America. He spent the early months of 1784 in Philadelphia winding up his business as inspector general. He was no longer pressed for ready money. Although he had drawn about $7,900 since January 1, 1783, he still had a balance of nearly $4,000 in the Treasury. His pay and allowances would bring him $466 per month until his discharge in April, and upon his discharge he would draw a bonus of $9,960[1] (full pay for five years). He would therefore leave the service with about $14,000—the balance due him on account of his pay and allowances as a major general. In addition to this, as the other foreign officers had now returned to Europe, Congress would grant him at least 10,000 guineas* on account of his "sacrifices and services." Thus by May 1 he would have quick assets of about $60,000—with the purchasing power of at least double that sum today.

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* The French and English versions of this letter in the Steuben Ms. give this month as September. The date of Steuben's petition was December 30, 1782. See page 305, *supra.*

But these quick assets would be but a small part of the Baron's fortune. His real estate holdings would soon make him very rich. His correspondence shows that his friends in Virginia were expediting the locating and surveying of the 15,000 acres granted him by the Old Dominion. Pennsylvania also gave him 2,000 acres.[2] His New York friends promised him a liberal grant as soon as their state could settle certain disputed boundaries. New Jersey had recently given him a country house and land near Hackensack.†[3] With similar tokens of gratitude from the other nine states, he would soon be a great landlord with ample capital to develop his property. But if he expected great wealth, he expected it as a matter of right because he had earned it. As he wrote a few months later to Governor Paca of Maryland:

> . . . It is the practice of all nations to bestow ample rewards on foreigners who have served them usefully. Can the American Government after a contest which gave them their independence refuse to make such a provision for one whom they acknowledge to have been an useful instrument in obtaining it?[5]

If we would understand the Baron's point of view, we must remember what he was and judge him by the ethics of his century and his profession. He was an eighteenth-century professional soldier. Judged by the historic importance of the cause he served and by the intrinsic value of his contribution to it, he was one of

* About $45,000 as the exchange was computed in a number of the Baron's papers.

† Much to the Baron's disgust this was a mere life estate. Later, he purchased the fee simple.[4] See page 332 n.

the most effective professional soldiers in all history. If he had contributed as significantly toward the founding of a new European dynasty as he contributed toward the founding of the new American republic, titles of nobility, princely revenues and rich estates would have been his portion. We should remember this point of view when we consider his claims against the United States. He was not a suppliant begging for charity. He was a professional expert, entitled to handsome compensation for valuable professional services. He was supported in this view by Hamilton, Peters, Duane, Gerry, Governor Clinton and many other prominent men.

As great wealth was now just around the corner, Steuben decided to establish a home in keeping with his dignity and fortune. Early in the winter of 1783–84 he leased a fine house and spacious grounds on Manhattan Island. The mansion, known as the "Louvre,"[6] was far out in the country.* Here he would live the spacious life of a country gentleman. Here he would make a comfortable refuge for Walker, North, Fairlie and other young soldier friends who were still hard up and seeking jobs since their discharge from the army. Here he would entertain the Livingstons, the Duanes, the Hamiltons, the Jays and his other New York friends. Here he would resume the elegant social life he had formerly known at Montpellier and Strassburg.

2

DURING his last few months in the army, Steuben wrote a treatise outlining a scientific military organization for the United States.[7] Washington studied this paper and wrote from Mount Vernon:

> I have perused with attention, the plan which you have formed for establishing a Continental militia and for training a certain part of the arms-bearing men of the Union as a militia in time of peace: and with the small alterations which have been suggested and made, I very much approve of it. It was no unpleasing and flatter-

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* Its site is now covered by the buildings of the New York Hospital—Cornell Medical College.

> ing circumstance to me to find such a coincidence of ideas as appears to run through your plan and the one I had to lay before a Committee of Congress in May last. Mine, however, was a hasty production, the consequence of a sudden call and little time for arrangement: Yours of mature thought and better digestion.
>
> . . . While men have a disposition to wrangle and disturb the peace of Society, either from ambitious political or interested motives, common prudence and foresight require such an establishment as is likely to insure us the blessings of peace, . . . and I can think of no plan more likely to answer the purpose, than the one you have suggested. . . . It therefore meets my approbation and has my best wishes for its success. . . .

The Baron's military policy was very simple. He proposed a Continental Militia, a nation-wide organization for the training of young citizen soldiers, a counterpart of the present National Guard. He suggested a territorial organization and administration of our military resources such as we now have in our corps areas. He also proposed a small regular army to perform those special military duties which obviously cannot be performed by citizen soldiers in time of peace.

In transmitting his plan to Congress on March 20, the Baron wrote:

> . . . As a proof of my attachment to the United States & wishes for their welfare, I take the liberty of offering your Excellency some military ideas upon a peace Establishment. If Congress find them worthy of consideration, I shall with pleasure give the necessary details to any person they may be pleased to name.[9] . . .

But Congress took no action. For more than a century thereafter we had no effective military organization and therefore waged all our wars with great waste of human life and with enormous and entirely unnecessary burdens of national debt and taxation. Finally, after the costly experience of the World War, a sound military system was established under the National Defense Act of 1920. It was discovered later that in passing this law Congress had unwittingly adopted an organization identical in principle with that proposed by Steuben and approved by Washington in 1784.

3

ABOUT the middle of March Steuben went to Annapolis to tender his resignation to Congress. There, on March 20, he wrote to the president:

> . . . The object for which I left my country, my friends and all that was dear to me is accomplished. . . .
>
> My feelings inform me that it is time to quit the stage & to sheath that sword which has been drawn (for the last time) in this glorious revolution.
>
> I return into the hands of Congress the Commission which I had the honor to receive from that honorable body & beg they will accept my respectful acknowledgments for the confidence with which I have been honored.
>
> . . . My Engagements with the United States being fulfilled and my military career finished, I request the attention of Congress to a report of their Committee on my Claims, dated 30th December, 1782.* To the justice and generosity of that Honorable body I commit myself & am with the greatest respect, etc.[9]

4

STEUBEN'S letter was referred to a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Arthur Lee. In its report on April 1, this committee formally agreed with the Hamilton committee that the Baron was entitled to "generous compensation" for his "sacrifices and services." It therefore recommended that he be given "the thanks of the U. S. in Congress assembled"; that "a gold-hilted sword be presented to him, as a mark of the high sense Congress entertain of his character and services"; and that he be paid "*two thousand dollars*† in consideration of the Sacrifices he made when he entered into the Service of the United States."[10]

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* The Hamilton committee, see page 304, *supra.*

† The italics are mine.

It will be noted that the committee appraised the value of Steuben's "sacrifices" at less than one-twentieth of his own minimum figure of $45,000 (10,000 guineas). Here the committee was probably influenced by its chairman, Arthur Lee. Lee was one of the American Commissioners in Paris when the Baron sailed for America. He had been ignored and humiliated by Franklin and Deane and was rarely consulted by them. He resented their attitude and considered them unscrupulous intriguers. Their conversion of Steuben, a poverty-stricken captain, into a well-to-do lieutenant general was a case in point. Lee had had no part in the transaction but he probably knew the facts. He had returned from a mission to Frederick the Great shortly before Steuben's second journey to Paris. Very likely he knew that Franklin and Deane, when they wrote their letters of introduction, were both aware the Baron was not a Prussian lieutenant general. Even Lee could not deny that Steuben deserved the thanks of Congress and the gold-hilted sword. But he probably took the not unreasonable view that an indemnity for relinquished annuities should depend upon the amount of the annuities relinquished. Mr. Lee may have had inside information as to the actual financial status of the actual Captain Steuben. When he fixed the capital value of the annuities actually relinquished by the captain at $2,000, he probably felt that his estimate was liberal. And here I must confess that after diligent research I am unable to confute Mr. Lee's conclusion.

As the debates of the Continental Congress were secret, we have no record of the discussions on the committee's report. No doubt Mr. Lee presented convincing proof that the Baron was a penniless adventurer when he came to Paris and that $2,000 or even 2,000 shillings would be liberal compensation for any revenue that he had given up. But other members probably took the view that Mr. Lee's position was too technical. Among Steuben's friends in Congress was Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts. Gerry had been a member when the Baron's services were accepted at York. Later, he certified that he remembered the terms submitted to Congress through the Witherspoon committee and that he always considered Steuben's claim, based upon his stipulation with that committee, to be "a claim of justice founded in the verbal contract of the parties."[11] We may therefore be sure that Gerry gave his personal testimony and his opinion in the debate. He or some other friend of the Baron's probably urged also that since the Witherspoon committee did not challenge the Baron's statement of sacrifices when it was a question of securing his services, it was beneath the dignity of a great nation to challenge it six years later, after he had performed those services. Or some more facetious member might point out that the Lee family had had a special representative on the Witherspoon committee. If Francis Lightfoot Lee was willing to accept the Baron's generous gambling proposition, was it sportsmanlike in his brother, Arthur, to refuse to pay the bet—on a mere technicality—when even he could not deny that the Baron had won his wager?

But there was another ground for hostility to the Baron at this time. Mr. Lee was probably supported by the enemies of the Cincinnati. The Society was unpopular on account of its exclusive character. Membership was limited to commissioned officers and its honors and insignia were to be transmitted under the law of primogeniture. Judge Ædanus Burke of South Carolina, under the name of "Cassius," had recently published a violent pamphlet attacking the Society. He maintained that it "creates a Race of Hereditary Patricians or Nobility." In directing his venom especially against Steuben as its "creator" and its "Grand Master," "Cassius" wrote: "I have the honor to inform Baron Steuben that though an order of peerage may do well under the petty princes of Germany, yet, in America, it is incompatible with our freedom." After reading this pamphlet, the Baron had written to Knox:

> . . . A ça, Monsieur Le Cincinnatus: Your pernicious designs are unveiled. You wish to introduce dukes and peers into our republic. . . . Cassius knows only a part of the secret. He makes me author and grand master, thus whipping you over my shoulders. But lis-

ten. I will prove to Cassius that this dangerous plan had its birth in the brains of two Yankees, Knox and Huntington.[12] . . .

But the Baron's repudiation of the honor was without avail. As Knox wrote in reply:

> . . . I contend to the utmost of my power that you only had your share in the matter, but it will have no effect. Burke's allusion has fixed it and you must support the credit of having introduced a new and hereditary nobility.[13] . . .

We may be sure that "Cassius" was quoted freely by the Baron's enemies in the secret debates on the report of the Lee committee.

5

BUT while we can only speculate as to the details of the debate, its result is of record. On April 8 Congress sent the Lee report back to the committee. In a new report on the twelfth,[14] the committee called attention to a document before the Hamilton committee in which the Baron stated that "he was possessed of a canonry worth 4,600 livres and of an appointment from the Margrave of Baden of 4,800 livres per annum," both of which he had relinquished "on coming to enter the Service of the U. S."* The committee then recommended that the Baron be paid $13,000 in compensation for his "sacrifices"—a very inadequate indemnity, if the committee accepted his statement that he had relinquished a life revenue of 9,400 francs (about $2,000) before he left Europe in 1777. In fact, the report of the committee, in Lee's handwriting, shows that he first proposed only $6,000.

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* In the first draft of his letter to the president of Congress in 1782, Steuben gave these revenues as 4,960 and 4,000 francs, respectively (see page 303). As the revenues mentioned by the committee are identical with those given in the footnote on page 107, and as it would be quite unusual for the Baron to use precisely the same arithmetic in two separate documents, I infer that the document mentioned by the committee is the autobiographic sketch given on pages 103–108. If so, it would not escape the notice of Chairman Lee that the Baron did not even mention the fact that Mr. Arthur Lee was one of the American commissioners in Paris.

When the amended report came up in the House on the thirteenth, it was apparent that the question of fact raised by Mr. Lee had diverted the attention of Congress from the real question at issue, that is, the value of Steuben's services and the merits of his claim for reward. Mr. Gerry therefore moved that the Baron be given $45,000 in securities bearing 6 per cent interest, in full of all his claims against the United States. This motion was lost. On the fifteenth, a resolution passed giving Steuben "the thanks of the United States in Congress assembled . . . for the great zeal and abilities he has discovered in the discharge of the several duties of his office." The gold-hilted sword also was authorized. No provision was made for compensation or reward but the Baron was formally assured that Congress would take steps "for doing him that justice which the peculiarity of his case authorized."

As this resolution postponed consideration of the Baron's claims and as he was pressed for ready money, Mr. Jefferson of Virginia now moved that "$10,000 be presented to Baron Steuben." To this, seven states voted *yea* and only three voted *nay;* but the motion was lost because under the Articles of Confederation it required nine affirmative votes out of a total of thirteen to pass a resolution. Another motion to give him $8,000 also was lost by a vote of eight *yeas* to three *nays.* A motion then passed instructing the superintendent of finance to advance $10,000 to the Baron "on account." This action was not so generous as it appears. Its only effect was to allow the Baron to draw some of the money already due him for arrears of pay and his military bonus.

The voting system under the Articles of Confederation made it possible for a minority to defeat Steuben's claims. But the issue even under that vicious system was very close. With the support of two or three additional adherents, Gerry could have carried a provision for the Baron's old age. If we assign any weight at all to Arthur Lee's influence we must give him credit for presenting a probable truth in such a way as to defeat the higher ends of justice and national gratitude.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE LOUVRE

1

THE Baron arrived in New York about the end of May and took up his home at the Louvre. When he took the lease, the house had been unoccupied and neglected for some time. Therefore, during the winter he had ordered extensive repairs under the supervision of Walker and Fairlie.[1] New furnishings had been purchased in keeping with the beauty of the mansion. A well-appointed stable was also installed. How many horses the Baron kept at this time is uncertain, but among his papers there is a bill for the repair of a "chariot," a "front carriage," and a "steel-spring sulkey."[2] Such a place also required a retinue of servants. It is therefore probable that when the Baron first entered the Louvre it had already cost him a considerable part of the $10,000 he had just drawn "on account" from the Treasury. But if this disturbed him, his concern was only momentary. In its last resolution Congress had promised to do him justice in the near future. He therefore took up his life as a country gentleman, entertaining his friends and indulging his taste for architecture and landscape gardening. If he was a bit short of cash, his great expectations would soon be realized and in the meantime his credit was good. It was his ambition to make the Louvre a handsome estate like Belmont, the Peters' place in Philadelphia. In fact, he wrote to Peters:

> . . . All my ambition is to model my house after yours; to see my friends without ceremony and without care. There are only two obstacles. *First*, I am not as rich as you are. *Second*, I have no beautiful wife to conduct my establishment. As to the first, I give it up. As to the second, it is my hope that you will not insist upon living forever, and then—But why in the devil should I tell you all my secret plans?[3]

Nor did the Baron neglect his duty as a generous and public-spirited citizen. During the summer he published his national defense plan under the title, *A Letter on an Established Militia and Military Arrangements Addressed to the Inhabitants of the United States.* This pamphlet was printed and distributed at his own expense as a contribution to the security and welfare of his adopted country. The city of New York accepted him as one of her most distinguished citizens. This was formally recognized in a special ordinance passed by the Common Council, October 11, 1784. After a long *whereas* recounting the Baron's distinguished services in the cause of American independence, the City Fathers enacted:

> . . . Now therefore know ye, that we being mindful of the distinguished merit of the said Baron de Steuben, have received and admitted, and by these presents do receive and admit the said Baron de Steuben to be a freeman of said city, within the limits of which he hath chosen his residence, to hold, exercise and enjoy all the privileges, advantages and immunities to the freedom of the said City incident and appertaining, as a public mark of the sense we entertain of his services, of our esteem for him personally, and of the interest we take in his happiness.—In testimony whereof we have caused the public seal of the said city to be hereunto affixed, and these presents to be inclosed in a golden box.[4] . . .

Toward the end of the year, the Baron's friends renewed their efforts to secure favorable action on his claim. On December 7, Hamilton wrote to John Jay in his behalf. This letter contains an authoritative contemporary appraisal of Steuben's military services:

> The Baron de Steuben has informed me that he is about to . . . make application to Congress for a final settlement of his pretentions. . . . I have been an eye-witness to the services he has rendered this Country—I will venture to say they have been of essential weight in the Revolution. 'Tis unquestionably to his efforts we are indebted for the introduction of discipline in the army: and that against a torrent of prejudice and opposition. 'Tis to that

discipline we owe the figure we made with a handful of men in the latter period of the war. 'Tis to that discipline we owe savings . . . of the utmost importance to our Exhausted finances. The Baron de Steuben, whatever pride of personality may say, is one of the few men who in the military line has rendered substantial services to the American Cause.[5] . . .

2

On February 5, 1784, the Baron again addressed Congress:

My knowledge of the public embarrassments has hitherto induced me to wait with patience the eventual determination of Congress on my affairs, but it has at length become indispensible for me to know with certainty what that determination will be. . . . 'Tis with Congress to decide, whether I am to continue with a decent competency a citizen of the country I have helped to defend, or whether I am to seek elsewhere a refuge in the generosity of those, on whose justice I have no claims. . . .

After reviewing the history of his case, he submits a statement itemizing his sacrifices and expenses and fixing the total amount due him at £9,255 18*s*. He then concludes:

It now remains with the honorable Congress to decide how far these pretentions are just. . . . Whatever may be the event, a speedy decision is of the greatest moment to me, and I rely too much on the equity of the representatives to doubt that the event will correspond with the justice of my expectations.[6]

The Baron's letter came up in the House on March 23, when a motion to pay him $25,000, about half the sum he claimed, was defeated. In June he was permitted to draw his balance from the Treasury, except the $3,600 funded at 6 per cent. Finally on September 27, Congress

Resolved, that in full consideration of the BARON DE STEUBEN's having relinquished different posts of honor and emolument in Europe, and rendered most essential services to the United States, he be allowed and paid out of the Treasury of the United States, the sum of 7,000* dollars in addition to former grants.

This resolution must be construed as a rejection of any claim for indemnification. Since Steuben's "essential services" could hardly be valued at less than $7,000 even by his enemies, Congress gave him no credit at all for relinquished revenues. As he wrote later:

> The contract being thus formally disavowed, it became the Baron to prove that it existed. At the time the Baron laid his claim before the Committee [that is, the Witherspoon committee] it certainly did not enter his head, to execute writings before a Notary. In making terms with a Sovereign, he had not conceived it *necessary*—he had therefore no written agreement to show—the Journals of Congress were searched, but nothing was to be found, all that could be done was to appeal to the individuals with whom he had treated.[7]

He therefore wrote a statement describing his conference with the Witherspoon committee, and sent copies of it to Witherspoon, Gerry and Duer, who were members of Congress, and to General Gates and Richard Peters who were members of the Board of War when he arrived at York. All of these gentlemen returned certificates confirming the accuracy of his statement of fact. So Steuben contended that the statement and the certificates, taken together, established the fact that Congress was bound by contract to indemnify him for his sacrifices. But before transmitting this contention to Congress, he tells us:

> After collecting this testimony, the Baron applied to men eminent in the law, to-wit, the Chancellor Livingston, Messrs. Jay, Hamilton and Duane;† he communicated to them the facts and proofs, asking their opinion, if the stipulation ought to have the validity of a contract in form: their concurrent determination decided the

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* The sum was fixed at $7,000 after successive motions to fix it at $15,000, $10,000 and $8,000 were defeated.

† The Baron's legal advisers were indeed "eminent in the law." A little later, Jay became the first Chief Justice of the United States.

question in the affirmative. Being assured of the sentiments of persons so respectable, the Baron determined to make a last appeal to Congress.[8]

3

WHILE Steuben was preparing his new memorial, he was again in need of money. In November he drew his funded balance and $6,000 of the $7,000 recently granted by Congress.[9] November 23 Hamilton wrote to Washington:

> The poor Baron is still soliciting Congress and has every prospect of indigence before him. He has his imprudences; but, upon the whole, he has rendered valuable services; and his merits and the reputation of the Country, alike, demand that he should not be left to suffer want.

But it is questionable whether any sum of money could have kept the Baron from indigence. He could never distinguish between capital and income. During the past two years he had drawn more than $26,000 (worth double that sum today) from the Treasury. A more prudent man would have conserved this as capital, but the Baron spent most of it as income.* This characteristic improvidence gave Billy North an opening for an effective pun. On the Louvre estate was a private burial lot containing the grave of Mr. David Provost, the former owner of the property. Provost was a very thrifty man known during his lifetime as "Ready-Money Provost." When one of Steuben's guests visited this little cemetery with North, he remarked that when the Baron died he would have a snug resting place beside Provost. To this Billy replied: "Then, Sir, his disposition must alter with his change of state, for in life he will never tolerate the idea of *laying by Ready Money*."[11]

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* Some of this money probably went to the purchase of the fee simple of the New Jersey property. It was bought in at public sale for £1,500, New York money (about $3,750).[10]

CHAPTER XLIV

BELLISARIUS

1

DURING the spring of 1786 the Baron was again in straitened circumstances. The money drawn from the Treasury in 1785 had been absorbed by his more pressing creditors or otherwise disbursed. It would be some time before he could expect a new supply. He was confident that his enemies would be unable to defeat his new claim, based upon positive proof of a contract. But it would take time to get it through Congress, where a quorum was rarely present even for urgent public business. In these circumstances the Baron found it difficult to maintain his proper state as a country gentleman. On June 7 he wrote from the Louvre to North,* then in Philadelphia:

> I have no wish to see anybody and no desire to make new acquaintances. I have had invitations to dine in the city. . . . I have declined them all. . . . I want no dinners that I cannot return. If anyone wants to see me as a friend . . . I always have a fish in my fish box and vegetables in my garden.
>
> . . . Some of my books have arrived. They repay me for all the visits I could receive. They are my consolation. . . .
>
> . . . My house (and yours) is still in the same state of desolation. . . . I cannot afford workmen and that distresses me. Even my fences are unfinished and the Tory cows eat all my grass—What do you want me to do? *Vive la Liberté!* In this country the laborers are barons and the barons are beggars.
>
> I have made a great reduction in my household. Mitchel† left the day after you. My precious Philadelphia gardener, the coachman, Laurens, and the farmer with all his family have fallen in the reform. However, I have a cow, two sheep, a big rooster with

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* When Steuben resigned as inspector general, Major North was appointed inspector of the little army on the frontier. He held that office until 1788.

† The Baron's butler.

> two aides-de-camp and thirty-six pullets. I therefore have milk and eggs, and eat "Aummellettes" and good clabber. . . .
>
> This is an exact account of my housekeeping. . . . When you are tired of the great and the fashionable world, you will find my cottage very agreeable. . . . And so, my dear Will, I have babbled enough.[1] . . .

But by the end of the month his optimism had returned. On June 27 the State of New York granted him a quarter township of land (16,000 acres).[2] This princely gift was made under the provisions of An Act for the Speedy Sale of Unappropriated Lands within this State, etc., which passed the legislature on May 5. In Section 33 of this statute it was provided that before any of the public lands could be offered for sale, Steuben should be permitted to select a quarter township for his own use, "without fee or reward, or paying any consideration for the land granted to him." This was to be a "public testimony" by the State of New York to the fact that

> Baron Frederick William Steuben, late a Major general in the Army of the United States hath rendered very essential service to this State, as one of the United States, by introducing a regular discipline into the army, and a spirit of economy into the interior administration of the regiments.

The Baron decided to locate his domain on the Mohawk River, the great navigable highway into the interior of the state.[3] As all available land in the lower valley was already held under prerevolutionary grants, he selected a tract north of the lands which had been granted by the British Crown to Peter Servis and to Lord Holland, respectively. This placed his southern boundary about fifteen miles north of Old Fort Schuyler, a frontier post within the bounds of the present city of Utica. The Baron probably made his selection from inaccurate maps in the state land office. When he made it he believed that his domain would extend westward beyond the Upper Mohawk above Fort Stanwix.* This would give him the cheap water trans-

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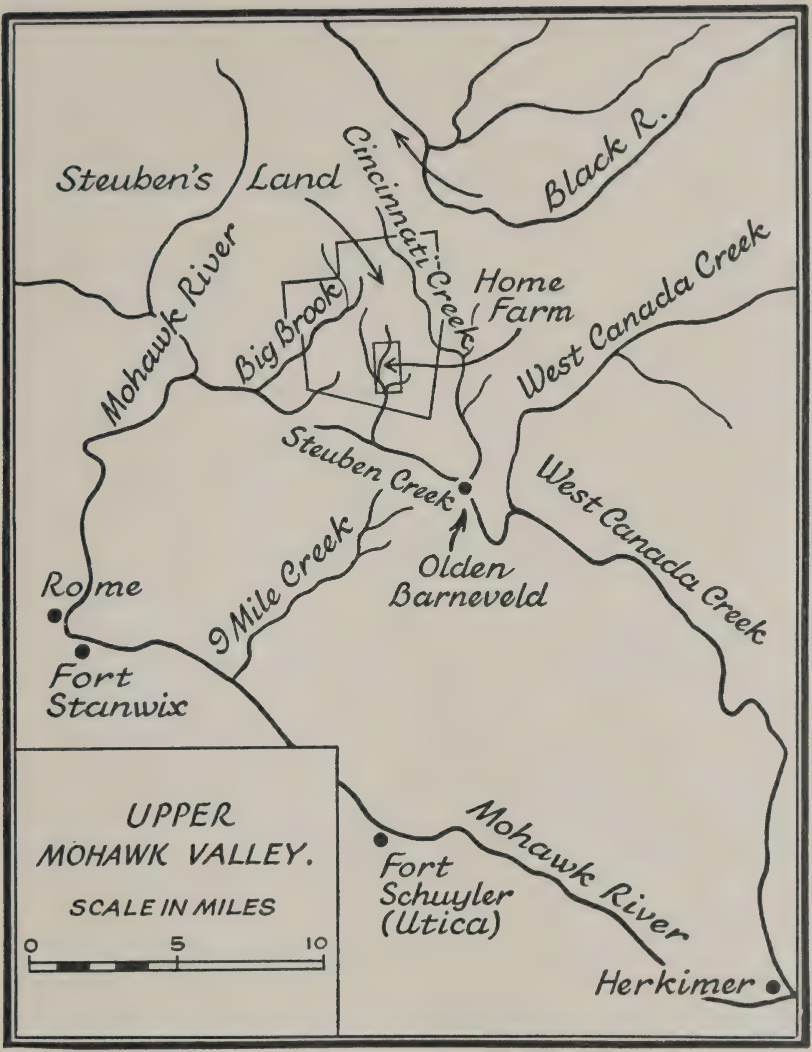
* Near the present city of Rome.


Steuben's Land
Black R.
Cincinnati Creek
Home Farm
Mohawk River
Big Brook
West Canada Creek
Steuben Creek
Olden Barneveld
9 Mile Creek
Rome
Fort Stanwix
West Canada Creek
UPPER MOHAWK VALLEY.
SCALE IN MILES
0
5
10
Fort Schuyler (Utica)
Mohawk River
Herkimer

portation needed for the prompt development of his property. There, with the ample capital he would soon receive from Congress, he planned to establish his baronial manor.

2

EARLY in July North went westward to inspect the military posts on the Ohio. Before his departure he wrote to his old chief and scolded him for his improvidence. To this the Baron replied:

> Ah, Billy, I am too proud of you not to suffer through your absence. But what folly to be attached to a man who is so often in a bad humor, scolding and disagreeable. That is what my reason tells me. But hush, my reason, you are mad. . . . It is true that he often scolds me. But it is because he wants me to be better than I really am. He wishes for order in my business affairs and I have none. He would have me be prudent, but my impulsive nature too often leads me to folly. He wishes that I were one of the seven sages of Greece, but my passions often make a fool of me. . . . Scold me, Billy, as often as I deserve it—that is to say, scold me always. . . .

In this same letter the Baron refers to his recent election as president of the New York Chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati:*

> . . . The fourth of July was celebrated by peals of bells, bursts of artillery, a great procession by the magistrates and different corps of the city. There was no congressional dinner, but the president [Nathaniel Gorham] gave a *déjeuner* from eight in the morning until eight in the evening.
>
> The Cincinnaties committed many follies. Grand ceremony for the admission of new members, thunder of cannon and a dinner of a hundred covers. Also an election—but since I have spoken of follies, you will pardon me if I omit the name of the new president.[4] . . .

We learn from a contemporary newspaper that more than a dozen patriotic toasts were drunk at this dinner, each accompanied by a salute of thirteen guns. But we are assured that "The greatest harmony and decorum was observed by the members of the society, the day was happily spent, and at the hour of eight in the evening, the company broke up."[5]

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* He was also president of the German Society of New York from 1785 until his death.

3

DURING the summer the Baron was much disturbed by the news from Massachusetts. The farmers were unable to pay their taxes. There were so many imprisonments for debt that mobs had formed to drive out the lawyers and judges and prevent the action of the courts. These were the commotions that soon led to "Shays' Rebellion." As North was a native of Massachusetts, the Baron wrote him:

> . . . Your dear compatriots are amusing themselves chasing the venerable disciples of Blackston. Beginning as usual—Town Metings, conventions, etc.—but ten days later, the chosen people assembled to the number of two hundred at Worchester, armed in the name of God with musket and bajonette in order to keep the judges from dispensing justice in the court hauss. They say that the senior judge, Ward, who is also a general, received some light pricks of the bajonette in the stern and the belly. We are expecting particulars . . . of this affair by every stage coach.[6]

On September 17, he again wrote to North, and after introducing the day as his fifty-sixth birthday,* returned to the news from New England:

> Let us chat a little on the politics of the day. This certainly gives us nothing to laugh about. It appears that the edifice we struggled for seven years to build is suddenly beginning to collapse.
>
> The mountaineers cry "to arms." They need only a Pisistratus to overthrow the laws of the republic, and I very much fear there is no Solon in this new Athens to quiet the discontents with firmness and moderation. . . . When a whole people complains . . . something must be wrong. . . . The emigration of farmers [from

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* For the birthday paragraph, see page 10, *supra*.

> Massachusetts] proves extreme distress. They are more attached to their cottages than princes to their palaces. The plebians say that they are crushed with taxes and persecuted by creditors. The patricians say that the people do not pay taxes, that they are idlers, that they refuse to pay their debts. Some say that the merchants, the speculators and the lawyers are building a tyrannical oligarchy. . . .
>
> . . . Lycurgus declared that citizen infamous who did not take a decided part in cases of division. But in this case I beg Monsieur Lycurgus to have a little patience with me, for, in truth, I do not yet know which side to take. . . . What a fine harmony prevails on all of our political operations. *Vivat Republica!*

In concluding this letter on October 1 the Baron wrote:

> Battle, my friend, battle, in every part of your filthy fatherland [New England]. Sullivan the Great announces a decisive victory at Portsmouth. The capitol was invested by several hundred insurgents. The senate and the dictator were held prisoners for several hours. Thirty unarmed chevaliers and a few rapscallions on foot made a vigorous attack with kicks and fisticuffs, put the insurgents to flight, took thirty prisoners, not a drop of blood spilt on either side. . . . Do you still doubt Samson's victory over the Philistines?[7]

4

THE tumults in Massachusetts brought Knox, the secretary of war, to Boston. To him their cause was very simple. He wrote to Washington that the complaint of oppressive taxes was a mere pretext and that the malcontents were making an organized attack on all property. "In a word," he wrote, "they are determined to annihilate all debts, public and private." How to suppress the insurrection was a delicate military problem. The discontent was so widespread that the state authorities feared to trust the militia. There were only a few Continental troops and these were scattered in distant frontier garrisons. But Knox found an ingenious solution for this difficulty. He had recently induced Congress to authorize additional regulars to deal with a dangerous Indian crisis west of the Alleghenies. He would now persuade Congress to raise most of these new troops in New England. Their announced objective would be Indian warfare. Their secret objective would be the suppression of insurrection. This plan was adopted. On October 19 Rufus King, one of the Congressmen from Massachusetts, wrote to his colleague, Elbridge Gerry, that Congress had agreed to increase the army and to raise a force of 1,220 men in New England.[8] The resolution passed the next day, allotting 660 recruits to Massachusetts and 260 to New Hampshire. On the twenty-third Knox wrote to Washington:

> . . . This measure is important, and will tend to strengthen the principle of government, if necessary, as well as to defend the frontier. I mention the idea of strengthening the government as confidential.

The resolution of Congress aroused the Baron's indignation. His sympathies were with the oppressed yeomanry of New England. The pretext of an Indian war might deceive the country but it did not deceive him. For a few days he took no action. North, just returned from his inspection trip to the Ohio, was again his guest at the Louvre. Billy was more interested in Polly Duane than in politics just at that time. But his days of courtship were brief. The secretary of war ordered him to Boston to assist in raising the new troops. After North's departure, the Baron wrote a philippic exposing the Knox scheme. But should he publish it? It would make new enemies for him. It would infuriate Rufus King who had already opposed his claims in Congress. It would probably alienate Gerry and other New England friends who had hitherto supported him. A long letter to North, commenced on the twenty-seventh, shows that he was undecided for several days. But on the night of the twenty-ninth he dropped his French and wrote in his best English:

> It is done;—said Brutus when he came out the Room of the Senat with the blody Dagger in his hand, with wich he stabbit Cesar—it is done said he Vivat Republica aut periat Mundi.

It is done sai i—with the pen in my hand, with wich I signed the name of Bellisarius to a piece wich will set all selected men in uproar, a Piece wich must raise Kings, Ministres & Ambassadors against a poor Republican—but Vivat Republica aut Periat Mundi.

Then resuming his usual French: "Yes, my dear North, the piece is signed and tomorrow goes to the printer. Pardon me, it is impossible to resist the temptation. . . . Scold me as much as you please—but it is done."[9]

5

THE article signed "Bellisarius," translated into English by the editor, was published in the *New York Daily Advertiser* on November 1. It filled two columns in the newspaper, but its gist is sufficiently given in the following excerpts:

> *Mr. Printer.* . . . We are very raw and unexperienced as republicans, or rather we are too supine and indolent to watch over our rights and liberties. . . . Let us at least make use of the privilege of investigating what happens about us although the secret proceedings of Congress are impervious to our view; surely when the drum beats, we may be permitted to ask, what means the noise?
>
> Now the trumpet sounds, the temple of Janus is opened, legions are to be raised, but where is the enemy? . . .

Bellisarius weighs the probability of military operations against England and shows that the suggestion is absurd. In like manner, he eliminates France, Spain, Holland and the Algerine pirates. He then proceeds:

> Let us now suppose these preparations to be against the Indians; even this does not appear very probable. To raise troops at Portsmouth and Boston for waging war between the rivers Wabash and Illinois, would be a singular idea, for . . . the distance is at least 1500 miles. One year would be requisite to raise and equip the troops for that service, and another to march them to the scene of action; such an operation would be as grand as it would be ridiculous; however the letters lately published by authority . . . seem

> to authorize this conjecture. It is only a Stratagem to fix the public attention. . . . To march the northern legions to the Mississippi is a story too absurd to be told to the negroes of Carolina.
>
> There must however be some urgent occasion to interest the State of Massachusetts in the measure of raising Continental troops, which even their delegates now urge the necessity of. . . . Since we are in the field of conjecture we will then ask whether there can be any design against the insurgents, to which I answer that a conjecture of this kind appears to me more absurd than all the others. . . .
>
> Was it the State of Delaware who implored the aid of Congress for the support of their government, there might be an apparent plausibility in it. But Massachusetts; that State always conducted by superior geniuses . . . that state which bears on her rolls, ninety-two thousand militiamen. . . . Can any one imagine that such a state, would stand in need of foreign support, in the administration of internal government?
>
> If however the numerous militia should coincide in sentiment with the malecontents, and a very small number of *respectable gentlemen* only, should be interested in keeping up the present system of administration, would Congress dare to support such an abominable oligarchy? . . . If taxes are not proportioned with equity, or any other reasonable cause of complaint should exist, does it not clearly belong to the legislature to correct the grievances, which are totally unconnected with the federal government? . . .

Bellisarius finally concludes that there can be no *reasonable* ground for the new troops to intervene in Massachusetts, but he presents his argument in such a way as to convince his readers that Congress intended them precisely for that purpose. Throughout his article, Bellisarius takes pains to praise the Massachusetts statesmen much as Mark Anthony praised those highly honorable men, Brutus and Cassius, and with precisely the same purpose and effect.

6

The scheme to use Continental troops in Massachusetts was "stabbit" by Bellisarius. Rufus King penetrated the Baron's disguise at once and denounced him as a Cataline who was preparing to lead the discontented and ignorant many in an attack upon the privileges and property of the respectable few. Four days after the article appeared, he wrote to Gerry:

> . . . *Alieni appetens sui profusus* was the character of the man who plotted the destruction of Rome; the same Disposition and the like desperate Fortune mark the man who openly justifies the conduct of the insurgents, and who will lead them if their cause prospers. I enclose you his performance of the 1st instant, under the signature of "Bellisarius." These opinions are his hourly conversation—Remember that the times are critical and that I write in confidence.[10]

Massachusetts was finally able to restore order. During the ensuing winter, a force of militia under Benjamin Lincoln brought the insurrection to an end. This was followed by an adjustment of grievances. But Shays' Rebellion was a blessing in disguise. It brought the whole country to a sense of the weakness of the confederation and thus prepared the way for the Constitutional Convention.

The day after the publication of the Bellisarius article, the Baron made another venture in politics. With Hamilton and many other thoughtful men at that time, he questioned the stability of democratic institutions. On November 2 he wrote to his friend, Prince Henry of Prussia, transmitting another letter written by a prominent American statesman. The contents of these letters are unknown but Prince Henry's reply indicates that they related to the critical political situation under the moribund Articles of Confederation. His Royal Highness was informed that a limited monarchy, like that of England, might be established in America, and he was asked whether he would accept the crown if it were tendered to him. He was also requested to send a cipher to facilitate further correspondence. There is some reason to believe that Steuben's partner in this enterprise was His Excellency, Nathaniel Gorham, President of the Continental Congress. Prince Henry replied with great caution. He declined to send a cipher, but suggested that he could arrange to meet a duly accredited American agent in Paris.[11] Nothing came of this correspondence. Before the prince's reply could have reached America, the Constitutional Convention had assembled in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER XLV

UP THE MOHAWK

1

DURING the latter half of November, 1786, the Baron was depressed and ill. On the fifteenth he wrote to North: "There is not a Smile on haven nor Earth. The Days vexed with the Politiks of our Glorius Government & the nights suffering by Rhumatisme & plaged by the Night mare." On the twenty-third he was worse: "I really have been sick since a fourthnight. A kind of flying gout or some devill or other. No appetit, oppression in my breast—I was not Out of my Room & within it no soul than Azor and myself." He was lonely at the Louvre. On the twenty-sixth he concludes:

> Tomorrow I'll go to town. i feel just strong eneugh to do it—I fligh from the Louvre. i detest the place & go to one wich I hate. . . . I will offer the lease of the Louvre to Mr. Gardoqui* & at his Repulse by publication to the public.[1]

He was unable to dispose of his lease and he was too hard up to live at the Louvre. Sometime during the winter he took lodgings at Mrs. Daubeny's boarding house in Wall Street†—then the center of the fashionable residence district. Mrs. Daubeny's guests were gentlemen only—members of Congress and other prominent men.[2] Here, in congenial society, the Baron recovered his health and spirits. He was unable to press his case in Congress as there was no quorum present, but he was busy accumulating proofs and writing his memorial. He was also busy with plans for the development of his domain on the Mohawk. In the spring he would establish a colony of emigrants from Massachusetts on his land. That he had but little capital for such an enterprise did not deter him and probably did not occur to him. In his military plans he had always weighed available resources with great care before making a decision. But he never applied this meticulous method in his financial operations.

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* Don Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish minister.

† Just when, it is impossible to say. Undated fragments of his letters indicate that after a brief residence in other lodgings, he returned to the Louvre for a short time before settling at Mrs. Daubeny's.

On January 4 the Baron received his gold-hilted sword with a letter from the secretary of war:

> Sir: The United States in Congress assembled, by their act of the 15th of April, 1784, expressed their high sense of your military talents, services and character, and as an honorable evidence thereof, they directed that a gold-hilted sword be presented to you. . . . It is with great satisfaction I embrace the occasion of presenting you the invaluable memorial of their sentiments and your eminent services. . . .

The sword and hilt were made by skilled workmen in London under the supervision of Colonel William L. Smith, the American Secretary of Legation and a former staff officer of Steuben's. The gold hilt was elaborately engraved with symbolic figures and bore the inscription, "The United States to Major General Baron Steuben, 15th April 1784, for Military Merit."

2

SOME weeks later, North visited his old chief at the *Maison D'Aubigni.** After Billy's return to Massachusetts the Baron wrote him that he had given a party and that among his distinguished guests were Señor Gardoqui and a number of Congressmen:

> . . . P—— [Polly Duane] acted as hostess for me with great success. Your portrait in the hall was admired by the ladies and the majority decided that the subject was handsomer than the picture. I maintained the contrary but I lost the case.

Referring to a note for Polly enclosed in Billy's last letter, the Baron announced: "I shall now dress in my best so as to deliver your billet doux. Am I not a good fellow to act as go-between for you?" He also expressed his pleasure that a new military post out in the western wilderness had been named Fort Steuben.* "I am . . . touched at this new mark of the attachment of my old army friends."[3]

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* Steubenese for Mrs. Daubeny's boarding house.

Polly received Billy's letters but she would not answer them. On March 10 Billy wrote to the Baron:

> . . . Why do you not make the girl write to me? Custom! Delicacy! Psha! Would I not break through custom for her? . . . Miss D—— knows what is delicate & if she can in her conscience say that she thinks it indelicate to write to me, why I must give the matter up & notwithstanding I have written her four letters, I will write her again and not expect an answer.[4]

The Baron submitted Billy's protest to Polly, but she was not disposed to yield. She adhered to the tradition of our great-great-grandmothers that a well-bred young lady should not exchange kisses or love letters with her betrothed until after the wedding. The Baron therefore wrote to Billy:

> . . . Two days ago I received your two letters, my friend. I have faithfully remitted the two enclosures to your P——. I don't know whether I can promise an answer. She insists that it is not the custom in this country for a good Christian young lady to write to a young gentleman until after she has slept with him. As I am neither much of a good Christian nor a married man, I do not understand this etiquette. . . . Your love affairs are still a secret. There are many conjectures but they are only whispered. As for me I neither confirm nor contradict.[5]

The Baron made an early start for the Mohawk. On April 14, he wrote to North from Albany:

> I arrived here by water day before yesterday . . . and this afternoon will continue my journey to Steuben. My surveyor and his party left this morning with the provisions and baggage for the campaign. . . .
>
> I gave your last letter to P——. She has promised to write to

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* On the site of the present city of Steubenville, Ohio.

you. Walker will send you her answer. During my absence, he will have the honor of being your intermediary.

My business with Congress is still delayed. My memorial is signed. Hamilton has promised to present it at the proper time. I have decided to trust myself entirely to his discretion.

No news from Madrid. I shall hope to find something on my return.* [6] . . .

The day before Steuben wrote this letter, the Legislature passed an act creating the University of the State of New York and making him a member of its first Board of Regents.

From Albany, Steuben went overland to Schenectady, where he joined his surveying party. The expedition, comprising the surveyor, James Cockburn, and his five assistants, embarked in hired bateaux and started up the Mohawk. When the flotilla reached Fort Plain, Steuben stopped off for several days while Cockburn took the bateaux on to the portage at Little Falls. From Fort Plain he wrote to Walker that he had already secured a number of colonists and expected to establish his settlement before his return to New York about the end of May.[7] He also set up business relations with Mr. Isaac Paris, a merchant of Canajoharie, making him his representative and disbursing agent for the Mohawk enterprise and giving him, in lieu of funds, a draft for $200. With reference to this draft he wrote to Walker: ". . . I find myself obliged to make another draft on Douer [William Duer] for $200. Have the goodness to tell him that this sum is indispensable to me." In the meantime, Cockburn also was acting as disbursing agent. His bill shows that his employer gave him £10 at Albany and £20 at Schenectady. That apparently exhausted the Baron's supply of liquid capital. Thereafter, Cockburn advanced all the expenses of the expedition: rent of bateaux, canoes and pack horses; the wages, subsistence and travel expenses of the surveyors, with several personal items for the Baron himself. When Cockburn got back to Albany after finishing his field work, he had spent about £116 more than he had received from his principal.[8] Steuben was pleased with this fiscal arrangement. It saved him from the annoyance of petty detail. It was convenient, when a bill was presented, to pass it on to Paris or Cockburn for payment.

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* Here the Baron refers to his negotiations with Gardoqui to secure a great land grant in Spanish Louisiana. See pages 355–358.

3

FROM Fort Plain the Baron proceeded to Little Falls, and thence by wagon to Fort Schuyler. Cockburn paid for the wagon and followed with the bateaux. The hire of a pack horse and other items in Cockburn's bill indicate that from Fort Schuyler the expedition went through the forest to the southern boundary of the Baron's domain. There a camp was established and Cockburn began to survey the boundaries as described in the patent issued by the state.* The whole tract has an area of 16,000 acres. Most of its surface is hilly. While the southwest corner is around nine hundred feet above sea level (or about five hundred feet above the Mohawk at Fort Schuyler), Starr Hill, some three miles to the northeast, rises nearly nine hundred feet higher. The whole region was covered with dense forest when Steuben first saw it. After traversing the boundaries, Cockburn ran north-south and east-west lines through the tract, dividing it into one hundred and sixty farm lots, averaging one hundred acres each.

His visit to his domain accomplished, the Baron left Cockburn to complete the survey, and returned to Fort Plain. There on May 19 he wrote to Walker:

> Here I am, this far on my return journey. I have spent sixteen days at Steuben. I have been all over my lands and am enchanted with them. The soil, the exposure and the climate, all meet my expectations. The upper Mohac [Mohawk] crosses my land on the west. Another river, navigable for the largest batteaux, traverses my land for nearly five miles on the east.† This river flows into the Canada River [now West Canada Creek] which flows into the

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* See sketch map, page 334.

† The Baron named this stream Cincinnati Creek. One of its tributaries which rises near the center of his domain he called Steuben Creek.

> Mohawk below the German Flats, so that within four hours I can go by batteau from my domain to Fort Herkimer, . . . about forty miles from Albanie.*
>
> The country abounds in excellent fish, especially trout. . . . I lived on trout and partridges while in the woods.

He informs Walker that he proposes to set aside 1,800 acres for his home farm, 300 acres each for Walker and North, and to dispose of the other farms to settlers. He has already made a contract with thirty families from New England. He is about to make another contract for a clearing of 60 acres near his own residence, to be ready for cultivation next spring. He proposes to establish a "Potash Manifacture"; there are fine water power sites for mills. And best news of all, emigrants from Massachusetts are coming up the valley every day:

> Already, lands adjoining mine are selling at from 20 to 30 "schilling"† per acre. My part is taken, my friend. A "blockhaus" in my woods will fix my retirement and my career. . . .

After sending his compliments and a kiss to Mrs. Walker,‡ he returns to an important item of business:

> See whether Douer [Duer] has paid the draft for $200 that I gave to Mr. Paris. If not you must get McCormick or some other friend of ours to advance it until my return. For it is absolutely necessary that Mr. Paris should have this sum for payments he is to make here for my account. . . . Adieu my son until I have the pleasure of embracing you.[9]

4

ON June 9 Paris, as Steuben's agent, made a contract with Samuel Sizer, a carpenter from West Springfield, Massachusetts, to build a frame dwelling house for the Baron near his landing place on the "Mowhawk River." The house was to be built from a plan which Sizer had prepared and which Steuben had approved. It was to contain "two Parlours, one Bed Room

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* In his enthusiasm he underestimates this distance by at least a half.

† At this rate his estate would soon be worth from $40,000 to $60,000.

‡ Walker had married an attractive Quakeress soon after the war.

& a Kitchen." It was to have glazed windows and "a Stack of Chimney with three smokes with a Bake oven." The outside boards were to be "Plained" and the inside walls were to be "Plaistered & white washed." Sizer was to receive $175 for building the house. The Baron was to "furnish at S^d Landing in proper time all the Boards, Shingles, nails, Hinges, Paint, oil, Glass, Putty &c which shall be found necessary for the S^d Building." This was to be the first manor house for the Baron's domain. The same contract also bound Sizer to clear and fence sixty acres near the proposed house. Both jobs were to be finished by the thirty-first of December, next.[10]

But the frame house by the river was never built. When Sizer arrived at the surveyor's camp, Cockburn had finished the survey of the west boundary. This revealed that the nearest point on "Mowhawk River" was three miles west of the Baron's land. On his visit in the early spring he probably thought that Big Brook, a tributary of the Mohawk, was the main river. During the spring floods, Big Brook masquerades as a river but by mid-June it again becomes a brook—too small for bateau navigation. The transportation outlook toward the east was even more discouraging. The Baron was wrong when he wrote to Walker that Cincinnati Creek was navigable for the "largest batteaux" from his domain to West Canada Creek and thence to the lower Mohawk. The fact is that like a toboggan slide, it is navigable in only one direction. Further exploration revealed that there were dangerous rapids south of Steuben's land; the creek falls four hundred feet in the next five miles. All this upset the plans for the first colony which were predicated on easy water transportation. The thirty families from New England, when they learned the facts, probably abandoned the Baron for other proprietors who owned land nearer the Mohawk. Here again General Steuben had departed from sound military practice. He should have postponed his attack until his advance guard under Cockburn had completed its reconnoissance. When he finally learned the facts, he decided to establish his baronial manor near his southern boundary in the valley of Steuben

Creek. Cockburn selected eight farm lots for the home farm of 800 acres. Near the center of this tract he marked out 60 acres.* And here Sizer went to work chopping out the Baron's first clearing.

5

ON the fourth of July Steuben was reëlected president of the New York Cincinnati. On the thirteenth he again appeared as a financier; he conveyed 6,000 acres of his New York land to "James Mountaindevort, Merchant, of the City of New York," subject to redemption at the end of one year.[11] The indenture gives the nominal consideration as 5*s*., but the document probably witnesses the loan of a considerable sum of money to meet his obligations to Paris and Cockburn and to provide capital for the further development of his property. As the conveyance of the 6,000 acres was never completed, it is probable that during the ensuing year, the Baron was able to borrow enough money from Hamilton and his other friends to take up Mountaindevort's note. In the meantime his claim for compensation made no progress in Congress. Hamilton did not find conditions favorable for its presentation.

Toward the end of August Steuben made another visit to his domain. This time Billy North went with him; they celebrated the Baron's fifty-seventh birthday there on September 17. They apparently remained until after the nineteenth, for on that day Sizer presented a bill for £108 16*s*. 8*d*., covering his operations up to that date.[12] What these earlier operations were is not clear, as the itemized bill is no longer extant. But since the Baron did not pay it when due, it appears as a "bill rendered" item in a later bill for £182 6*s*. 3*d*. which Sizer submitted in November. The items given in the second bill and other papers in the archives of the Oneida Historical Society throw considerable light on Sizer's activities. From September 19 to November 11 he employed eight men at wages of 53*s*. 4*d*. ($6.67) per month, a team for seventeen days at 75 cents per day and a horse for nine days at 37½ cents per day. Other items indicate that with his gang of men he continued the clearing of "Sixty," built a log house for the Baron with a bake oven in the chimney, built a milldam and cut timbers for a sawmill on Steuben Creek, and cut a trail from "Sixty" to Nine-Mile Creek. Much of this work was probably commenced prior to September 19 and was covered by the first bill. It also appears that Sizer stopped work on November 11 and returned to his home in Massachusetts for the winter.

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* This area is referred to as "Sixty" in the Baron's papers and is still known by that name among the people of that region. The sketch map, page 334, shows the "home farm."

Late in the autumn, Cockburn also rendered a second bill for £72 15*s*. 9*d*.[13] This bill includes £15 for "a large map of Steuben's estate with a field book."[14] There are also items for four copies of the map at 16*s*. each. The bill indicates that Cockburn visited "Sixty" in September while the Baron and North were there and again in November just before Sizer started for home. As Sizer had not been paid and was short of supplies, Cockburn again acted as "disbursing agent" for the Baron to the amount of £27 9*s*. 10*d*. Two items in this bill refer to "battowing up Canada Creek," and another to going up "Canada loop." It was probably on this November trip that Cockburn "battowed" from the Mohawk to within three miles of "Sixty" on Steuben Creek. The Baron mentioned this exploit in his diary three years later when he was still seeking to develop a water route to his domain.

While on this journey to the Mohawk Valley, Steuben and North visited Duanesburg,* the headquarters of a great tract of land belonging to James Duane. There Billy went to inspect his future home. A few weeks later, on October 14, he and Polly were married. In the spring they moved to Duanesburg and settled on a farm that James Duane gave them. In his future trips to and from "Sixty," the Baron would break his journey at Duanesburg to visit his children.

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* About twelve miles southwest of Schenectady.

6

ON October 6 Steuben's memorial[15] was taken up in Congress and referred to a committee. In this document he maintained that Congress had entered into a contract binding the United States

> To indemnify me, from the time I left Europe, for an annual income, during my life, of about 600 guineas, or rather say, five hundred and eighty, which I admit to be the real sum. . . .

As the income already relinquished, without counting interest, now amounted to more than 5,800 guineas (or say $27,000), he was evidently entitled to a considerable sum over and above the $7,000 which Congress had allowed him for his sacrifices and services in 1785. And furthermore, in addition to compensation for the income already sacrificed, he was entitled to a pension of 580 guineas per annum until the end of his life, or to the capitalized value of such an annuity. With the memorial he submitted a summary of the facts and his specific proofs of the existence of the contract.[16] But as his enemies might be able to bury his papers in committee, he had them printed in pamphlet form[17] for the convenience of each member of Congress and for distribution to his friends and to the newspapers.

Suppose, however, that some future Arthur Lee should deny the Baron ever had an income of 580 guineas to relinquish. The memorial deftly anticipated this question.

> Should it be asked, where is the proof of the amount of the income relinquished? I answer, First, That I have several times explained this matter, as well as my distance from Europe would permit, to the satisfaction of different Committees of Congress. . . . Secondly, That it is wholly immaterial, whether I had such an income, or not. The contract is made on the *statement* of a particular sum, alleged to have been renounced by me, as the *criterion* of a future indemnity. The existence of the fact is not a subject of enquiry. If the emoluments renounced had exceeded the sum stated, there would have been no claim to an indemnity beyond that sum; and by a

> parity of reasoning, if they fall short of it, there is no pretence for an abatement beyond my own admission of the deficiency.*

I am unable to say whether this pleading had the sanction of all of the Baron's eminent legal advisers. But Hamilton certainly approved it, if he did not actually write it. The memorial had been in his hands with full power to revise it for six months before he submitted it to Congress.†

7

HAMILTON sent copies of the printed pamphlet to prominent men throughout the country and urged them to write to Congress in Steuben's behalf. In his letter to Washington he wrote:

> . . . He is fortified with materials which in Europe could not fail to establish the belief of the contract he alleges. . . . Our reputation abroad is not, at present, too high. To dismiss an old soldier, empty and hungry, to seek the bounty of those on whom he has no claims, and to complain of unkind returns and violated engagements will certainly not tend to raise it.[18] . . .

Washington wrote immediately to the secretary of Congress, pointing out that Steuben had a special title to the national gratitude, for he had

> . . . hazarded his life and fortune at a critical period of our affairs *without those obligations on his part which compelled Americans to do it*,‡ and from that moment to the close of the war, rendered essential services to the cause.[19]

He also wrote to the Baron:

> . . . I have expressed in unequivocal terms a wish that your merits and sacrifices may be rewarded to your entire satisfaction —If they should not, and it proves a means of your withdrawing from the United States, I shall be among the number of those who will regret the event, as it would give me pleasure that you should

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* Here he refers to his admission that the exact amount was 580 guineas instead of "about 600 guineas" as he had originally stated.

† See page 346, *supra*.

‡ The italics are mine.

continue in a Country the liberties of which owe much to your services.[19]

Washington's letter and others in Steuben's behalf were referred to the committee. But they had little weight. Unfortunately, Rufus King was a member. He had opposed the Baron's claims even before "Bellisarius" had exposed his own scheme to employ Continental troops against the debt-ridden yeomanry of Massachusetts. He now denied the existence of the contract and maintained that the claimant had already received more than his due. Some months before this, he had written to Gerry that Steuben "was a Soldier of Fortune and a Mercenary in Europe" where he had received "little money and less Flattery." In America, however, the government had "added bounty to justice and possessed him of real Monies exceeding in amount the life aggregate of the Revenues of a prince of the German Empire.[20] . . ." In fact, there was some ground for King's position. Before the committee was a copy of Steuben's account with the Treasury which showed that he had drawn nearly $28,000 in specie during the past four years. This was a large sum of money in a bankrupt country where the native-born war veterans had been paid off in I O U's worth less than a tenth of their face value, and where the monthly wage of a laborer was less than $7. If, to use Hamilton's phrase, the Baron was now "empty and hungry," it was largely because of his own improvidence.

CHAPTER XLVI

CASTLES IN SPAIN

1

DURING the winter of 1787–88 Steuben was busy with plans for his colony on the Mohawk. As he was short of cash, he tried to raise funds by the sale of a part of his land. Samuel Sizer acted as his sales agent in Massachusetts. Sizer had advertised in the newspapers* and the response had been encouraging. He therefore hoped to sell enough land to build a sawmill and gristmill on Steuben Creek and to finish clearing "Sixty" this year. But here there was a dilemma. Prospective purchasers would not buy until they could see the land after the snow was off. With the snow gone, however, there would be no sledding and no way of getting the mill stone up to Steuben through the woods. Sizer would be unable to advance any money of his own until he could sell his farm. On February 2 he wrote to his nephew, who was apparently in Steuben's confidence:

> . . . If I should not be abel to collect the money to set out in season, I think it would be better for the Baron to advance some for I presume that I should be abel to refund it [from land sales] by fall at the farthest.[1]

Steuben appears to have scraped up some money but not enough to do much good. Sizer did not start for "Sixty" until long after the snow was gone. As for the mill stone, it did not get there that spring. All this might have discouraged some speculators, but not so the Baron. He had another iron in the fire. He would soon finance his Mohawk speculation with the profits of a bigger speculation on the Mississippi. During the past year he had made friends with Don Diego de Gardoqui, the

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* Cockburn's second bill shows that he had advertised land for the Baron in 1787 and had given a copy of the map to Sizer.

Spanish envoy to the Continental Congress. Gardoqui was seeking recognition of Spain's claim to the exclusive right of navigating the Mississippi. At that time His Most Catholic Majesty claimed the whole continent west of the river and a vast territory east of the river extending as far north as the present site of Vicksburg. As the lower Mississippi was one of his interior waterways, he insisted that his subjects alone had the right to navigate it. At first there was little opposition to the Spanish pretensions. The people of New England and the Middle States were not interested in the navigation of the Mississippi. They regarded the Allegheny Mountains as a permanent barrier to further national expansion toward the southwest. The Mississippi was as remote to them, then, as the Congo is to us today. They were therefore disposed to concede the Spanish claim. But the Southern states objected. Some of their wayward children had settled west of the mountains. The backwoodsmen of Kentucky and Tennessee insisted that the Mississippi was their only commercial outlet. If the Union would not or could not secure its navigation for them, they would leave the Union and take it themselves. This was the prospect that confronted Gardoqui. In a few years, these backwoodsmen would take New Orleans and oust the Spaniards from the Mississippi Valley. The government east of the mountains, even if bound by treaty, would be too indifferent, too remote, and too weak to restrain them.[2]

The Baron had a solution for this delicate problem. He showed his plan to Gardoqui on February 2,[3] and on March 16 transmitted it, through Gardoqui, to Floridablanca, the King's minister at Madrid.[4] If Spain would give him 2,000,000 acres of land at a suitable place on the east bank of the Mississippi, he and his associates would establish a military colony upon it. With upwards of 4,000 colonists organized as a militia, and a little standing army of about 1,000 regulars, he would defend the Spanish dominions from invasion. He himself would be the commanding general. Ben Walker, Billy North and other young veteran officers were eager to serve under him again. He would give each settler and private soldier a good farm of 230 acres.

Each officer and noncommissioned officer would receive a larger plantation in proportion to his rank. There would be "millions in it" for the Baron and his friends. There would be 750,000 acres for sale or for cultivation after giving farms to the colonists and soldiers. In addition to this the Baron stipulated for a commercial concession with special navigation privileges on the river and an exclusive right to sell the products of the Mississippi Valley in Louisiana, West Florida and the Spanish West Indies.

But would this military colony be strong enough to resist the settlers in the Ohio Valley? Yes: because the Baron proposed to enlist the best of the pioneers as his soldiers and colonists. He would let these in on the ground floor and, once in, they would fight for their own monopoly in fighting for the King of Spain. In a paper he submitted to Gardoqui, we find: ". . . Spain not only raises a force within herself equal to defend her—but raises that very force out of those people who would else be constrained by necessity, if not by choice, to attack and assault her."[5] But better yet, the commercial concession would tend to remove the discontent of the Westerners by giving them the fullest benefit of cheap river transportation. It would be more profitable for a Kentuckian to sell his corn and pork and tobacco at a good price to the Baron's corporation than to incur the risk and expense of a long journey down to New Orleans in his own flatboat.

But how about financing this gigantic enterprise? Where would the Baron raise the necessary capital? If he was hard pressed to exploit 16,000 acres on the Mohawk, how could he develop 2,000,000 acres on the Mississippi? And here we come to the most attractive feature of the scheme. The financing would be up to the King of Spain. His Most Catholic Majesty would take the Baron's military force on his pay roll and also give a bonus of 100 Spanish milled dollars to every colonist and soldier—more than a year's wages for an American laborer. Besides this, the King would advance $100,000 to the concessionaires to meet their initial expenses and to start the commercial corporation. This advance would soon be returned to His Majesty, for the Baron estimated that the capital invested in the commercial monopoly would grow at the rate of 75 per cent per annum. This, he insisted, was a highly conservative estimate. But he computed that, even at that low rate, $50,000 invested in 1788 would grow to more than $470,000 in 1792.[6] Nor was the Baron's plan regarded as a wild-cat scheme by his contemporaries. Just at that time, George Rogers Clark, John Sevier and other prominent Americans were seeking similar concessions from the Spanish Crown.[7]

2

ON April 13, 1788, the Baron was wounded by rioters in the streets of New York. The riot, long famous as the "Doctors' Mob," was occasioned by the discovery that a number of "young students of physick" had taken up bodies from Trinity Church Yard for dissection. The people were enraged and a great mob formed. When they found partly dissected subjects at the hospital they "were determined to sacrifice the physicians." Governor Clinton finally found it necessary to employ the militia in order to restore order.[8] The Baron's part in this incident is given by William A. Duer:

> The Governor declared his determination to resort to the most vigorous and decisive measures for quelling the riot. The Baron, in the benevolence of his heart, remonstrated with the Governor against ordering the militia to fire; when, in the midst of his harangue he was struck in the forehead by a brick-bat,* which, according to the Governor's account, not only knocked the good Baron down, but overset his humanity and brought his compassion, with his body to the ground; which he no sooner touched than he cried out lustily, "*fire, Governor, fire.*" I saw the poor Baron brought bleeding into my father's house, and after he had retired, to have his wound dressed, I heard the Governor relate the story.[9]

* John Jay, who was assisting the Baron as a peacemaker, was felled by another brickbat.

While the Baron was recovering from his wound, Billy and Polly North left New York for their new home. They sailed up the Hudson on a passenger sloop and made the journey to Albany in three days. A few days after their arrival at Duanesburg, Billy rode over to "Schohara" to vote for the ratification of the new federal constitution by the State of New York. The prospect was discouraging as "Schohara" voted "3 to 1 against it."[10] By this time the Baron had moved from the "Maison D'Aubigni" and had taken more economical quarters with Ben and Polly Walker in their house in King Street. Early in May he left New York for his Mohawk estate.[11] From Duanesburg on May 23 he wrote to Walker:

> Here I am, my friend, for the past four days with my children. They have received me with a tenderness that I wish I could merit. Our friend Billy makes a good farmer as he is a good husband and good friend, and in a short time we shall see him also a good father. The bad weather prevents my getting under way to Steuben. I must however set out to see if there are people there and what they are doing. I shall count on setting out tomorrow morning.
>
> I have given Fairlie [at Albany], as we agreed, a draft on you for £100. This will suffice for my present campaign. Sell my horses, the sulkey, my old carriage, indeed, everything that you will except my books. . . .
>
> Do not fail to see M. Gardoqui and ask him if he has any orders for me. I hope he will take refuge at the Louvre* and dispose of it as he pleases.

He then instructs Walker to confer with "our friend Armstrong" on "our speculation in the Illinois." The nature of this additional "iron in the fire" is not clear, but William Duer, Royal Flint and Daniel Parker, three prominent speculators, are mentioned as parties to the deal. "If Hammilton thinks my presence is necessary on my business [*i.e.* his claim in Congress] write me and I will return without delay."[12] Otherwise, he does not expect to return to New York until August. In conclusion he gives Walker carte blanche to sell his New Jersey estate.

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* By this time the Louvre was dismantled but, apparently, Steuben was still burdened with the lease.

3

STEUBEN set out on his journey up the Mohawk in an optimistic mood. He had recently received the encouraging news from Mitchell, his former butler, that a number of settlers were preparing to go from Massachusetts to Steuben to buy land. One party of fifteen farmers and another of eight would start before the end of the month. Sizer expected to start on the twenty-sixth. Also a Mr. Dewey promised to "fetch" enough people to take up 4,000 acres. But there was a disturbing note in Mitchell's letter. Governor Clinton and other prosperous speculators owned land on the upper Mohawk and they too were seeking colonists in Massachusetts. In this connection Mitchell wrote:

> That vilain, Mr. White, the Governor's agent, has been in Richmond* this winter past and has told some of his dam'd lies. He said that winter sets in sometime in October at Steuben and lasts to the beginning of June; but on the contrary, the Township of Clinton is in every respect equal to the Holy Land. These infamous lies has deluded some men, but I have endeavored to expose him as much as possible & you, I hope, will cane him when he comes in your way.[13]

Whether Mr. White got the caning he deserved I do not know. But when the Baron got to "Sixty" he found that all the land buyers had gone elsewhere. Samuel Sizer was there, but instead of proceeds from land sales he tendered a bill for wages and expenses. Out of the £100 for which he had drawn on Ben Walker at Albany, the Baron was able to settle with Sizer and to give him further employment. During the summer Sizer worked at various jobs, including a dam for the sawmill on Steuben Creek. Late in the autumn the Baron sent him the saw for the sawmill and $50 in cash. At that time he learned that only three or four settlers would spend the winter on his domain.[14]

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* In western Massachusetts near the New York line.

4

A few days after Steuben left Duanesburg for the Mohawk, North got a letter from Walker telling about his struggles with the Baron's creditors. He replied:

> . . . I am truly distressed at your situation and the Baron's. What can be done? I know not. I have advanced him near 400 dollars in cash and it is impossible for me to do more.* . . . I sometimes wish I had never seen or never loved the Baron. If he makes his friends happy by his goodness and amiable qualities, he also makes them miserable by his want of management and misfortunes. . . .
>
> I know not what advice to give in the Baron's affairs. If Congress will not or can not give him anything, if the other affair [*i.e.* the Spanish Colony] does not take place, then he must sell Steuben or anything else to satisfy his creditors. . . . If he could sell his Virginia land at 1 shilling an acre it would amount to 700 £, or his Pennsylvania land for which he has the patents, descriptions, etc. But what is to be done immediately to satisfy the creditors? If Hammilton or any other responsible man could take the debts upon himself and give notes payable with interest in one year, the Baron has enough to satisfy his debts twice over even allowing his things to sell at the lowest prices. . . . Steuben would sell at this moment at 4 shillings per acre. . . . Can nothing be done with the Jersey place? . . . I wish you would do anything with it that will raise money and I will take half or the whole of the blame.

But North was hopeful about the Spanish scheme.

> If the plan takes place we go together [to the Mississippi]. My wife will submit and so must yours. If it falls through, which we shall know by August—then perhaps farming will be the best thing for both of us.[16] . . .

Billy hopes to see Ben in New York "the beginning of July";

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* He had advanced much more than he could afford. Just before his marriage he had informed his future father-in-law that his whole fortune, including the money loaned to Steuben, was less than $1,500.[15]

but he does not explain that he and Polly are going to the city so that she can be near her mother and the family doctor.

5

STEUBEN did not return to New York until after the fourth of July. We learn from the *Daily Advertiser* of the fifth that he was absent from the annual meeting of the Cincinnati on Independence Day. But we are informed that he was reëlected president, and that in "Toast Number 6," at the annual banquet, the Cincinnati drank the health of "Baron Steuben, the President of the Society." About the fifteenth Frederick Steuben North was born at his grandfather Duane's.

On August 18 Hamilton reintroduced the memorial. It was referred to a committee which reported a week later that Steuben had already received $44,000 and that of this he had been given $32,900 since the beginning of 1784. The committee denied that he had any claim "founded on a contract"; but in view of his "merit and services" and "the peculiarity of his situation," it recommended "that he be allowed at the rate of —— dollars per annum during his natural life."[17] A favorable vote on this report would have given the Baron a pension, but as it denied the existence of the contract, Hamilton had it recommitted, hoping for a more favorable parliamentary situation later. But no further action was taken by the Continental Congress. A few weeks later its sessions ended. Steuben must now wait for the action of a new federal government under the new Constitution which had just been ratified.

6

ON September 18, the day after his fifty-eighth birthday, the Baron wrote to North:

> Yesterday, my dear Bill, it was a year when you did cut your name & mine in a Big tree at Steuben. it was a year that the Constitution was signed at Philadelphie, it was elleven year when Bourgoin capitulated at Sarratoga & it was . . . . fifty-eight year . . . .

I celebrated the Day in dining with Our friend Walker where we wished health and happiness to our friend in the woods.

Nothing yet from Don Quixote Contrie. The first vessel must bring letters.

Nothing yet decided by Congres, a new Report is made; my friends are warm, my Ennemies read hot & all I can do is keep cool.

Armstrong and me have taken our Winter quarter together. On the first of next month we shall occupy the corner house in Nassau Street. . . . We pay 48 £ till the first of May. I shall then be in the neighborhood of the Church, the major [mayor] and the Bishop, Armstrong near the Play-houss, some B—— houses and blac Sam.* Our politiciens are now bussi in settling the Etiquette of the New Court. A Palais Royal is to be prepared, audience & Leve Days to be fixed, the ceremonies to be determined. My Oppinion as an Old Courtier has been Asked. I begun by abollishing all nut craking after the desart. I proposed the number of bows to be received & returned & made Several useful observations. . . .

After giving a bit of gossip about some of North's friends, he concludes:

But what are all these Creatures to you & me, if nothing arrives from the Escurial? . . .

With impatience I await a rapport from Steuben. A certain Sympathie, a certain je ne scai quoi, leads me to suspect that my Old bones will find their rest in this Elisium.†

My blessing for you & your Wife & Son.[18]

North was greatly concerned at the Baron's plan to go to housekeeping with General Armstrong. This letter confirmed recent news from Walker that their old friend had grown tired of economizing and of living quietly in lodgings. Instead of saving his money to pay his old creditors he was lightheartedly acquiring new ones. And Armstrong would be the worst housekeeping partner he could have. Billy considered the general one of those sponges who enjoy good living at the expense of

* Black Sam was the nickname of Samuel Fraunces, proprietor of the famous Fraunces' Tavern in Broad Street where Washington bade farewell to his officers in December, 1783.

† Here the Baron proved to be a true prophet.

their friends. He had reveled at the Baron's expense at the Louvre. He would share and exploit his hospitality in Nassau Street, without contending for his share of the bills. To make things worse, Mitchell was returning to the Baron's service and would be his major-domo in Nassau Street as he had been during the flush days at the Louvre. This housekeeping plan would complete the Baron's ruin.

All this made North see red. If he were in New York he would put a stop to this folly. He would go to the Baron and give him a piece of his mind. As he could not leave his family and his farm, he attempted to make his protest by letter. But he found it impossible to attack his old chief in cold ink. Finally he hit on the solution that appears in the following letter:

My dear Baron

I can not set down coolly to write unkind things to you—the enclosed letter was intended for Walker. Therefore I said in it whatever I thought. It was my intention to have written another to you in which I wished to have said as much. But after beginning several times, I found I had not the heart to say the harsh but necessary things directly to you which I said to him of you.

It is necessary your situation should be laid open to you & if I have not the friendship to do it, what friend has? If I dared not tell you what I dared tell him, I could not expect he would have more courage & if he had not you would have had a right to say you had friends who saw you doing wrong & had not the friendship to tell you so.

In short, my dear Baron, I wished to give you advice. I wished to warn you against the rocks on which you had struck before, & I wished to do this gently but fully. I could not do it directly to yourself. Inclosing you this letter was the only way which was left.

I pray you to receive it & read it with an eye of friendship—Follow the advice it contains & love me as a true though an ill-natured friend deserves to be loved.[19]

Yours Affectionately through life,

W. North.

The gist of the inclosure follows:

My dear Ben:

. . . I have frequently doubted whether real friendship gave us more pleasure than pain. . . . For instance, the Baron, by his thousand acts of kindness, . . . by his goodness of heart & numberless other amiable qualities, not only makes me love him but gives me pleasure when ever I think of them—On the other hand, this very goodness of heart, which frequently betrays him into weakness—his ill-judged liberality, inattention to expense & thoughtlessness of the future, has given & will always give me the sincerest pain.

. . . He has no notion of husbanding his money & spending as if there was no probability of his getting more. Used to a country where whatever a Nobleman did was always right & a rascally peasantry dare not call him to an account, he forgets that here . . . no man is independent except by his being free of debt & that a Nobleman who owes can neither be screened from paying or from that legal insult which the creditor (tho' ever so mean) offers to his debtor.

. . . What a number of undeserving rascals has he feasted. . . . What money has been wasted. . . . Security for a worthless German, plan for the Militia of the United States, improvements at the Louvre. . . . Liverys, equipage and a thousand other extravagances which I neither can nor wish to recollect. . . .

. . . Tho' he has not received what is due to him for the Assistance he gave the United States, he has received money sufficient, had he been an œconomist or had he known what to do with it—which might have made him independent in his own country for life.

He . . . is now reduced to the most humiliating condition a man of honor can be—His house surrounded by duns! It is true his debts were not contracted by gaming and drinking. He will say they were for necessaries for which the Country which is indebted to him would not enable him to pay. I deny that they were necessaries. Lent's bill was not necessary. Douglass' bill, though part necessary (for I would be pained not to see him dress like a gentleman—& that rascal too* not dressed decently: like his servant, &

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* Here North refers to Mitchell, the Baron's butler.

not like a beau, with his silk stockings and waistcoats) was not all so. . . . Numberless other debts were not necessary . . . but they were contracted & they must be paid.

We both love the Baron & should love him if his foibles were a thousand times greater than they are. We must therefore stick to him & stick faster in his adversity than we did in his prosperity. We must not be affraid of telling him truths though ever so disagreeable. . . . If he should hate me for this last effort to serve him, I shall have learned that true friendship consists in flattery—honour, in betraying your friend.

The Jersey estate must be sold and the proceeds sacredly appropriated to paying his debts & with the remainder he must live a recluse till the new Government decides on his affairs or that some other plan of life is offered [Such as the Spanish concession, for example] . . .

He must not live with Armstrong in that house this winter. They will set out with only breakfasting at home, but before winter is out they will give petit soupers. . . . Say and do everything you can to make the Baron . . . give up that cursed house-keeping plan which I see fraught with new ruin under the auspices of that worthless rascal Mitchel. . . .

He had better want the pleasures of society than subject himself to new difficulties & perhaps a jail. He must come and stay with me. You and your wife must come along, as well for our sakes as to make his time pass more happily. . . . Come all of you. We will find a place to put you in, if it is no other than in our hearts.[20] . . .

In transmitting the foregoing letter and inclosure, Billy wrote to Ben:

. . . God knows I would as soon wound myself as wound him, but his sore must be probed. . . .

I send you the letter to be delivered sealed (not as if you were privy to the contents) provided you think he intends to go on with that plan of housekeeping & not paying his debts—for if he gives up the one & pays the other, there will be no use of telling him of his former faults. But if you think he is getting to sleep over his situation let him be awaked, better be awaked by the voice of a friend than by the bull dogs of the law. . . . If it loses me his friendship I cant help it. While I am his friend, I will tell him his faults.[21] . . .

7

NORTH wrote his three letters on September 28. When Walker received them about October 10, the Baron had already moved to Nassau Street but had promised to save his money for his creditors. By the twenty-second he had forgotten this good resolution, so Ben obeyed his instructions and left Billy's letter, with the longer letter inclosed, on the Baron's writing table. The next day Steuben wrote to North:

> If you attribute my silence to resentment at your sincerity, you do not do justice to my heart. . . . I would be as sorry to have my friends blind to my faults as to have them insensible to my good qualities. No, my Friend, never cease to tell me the truth and I shall never cease to love you sincerely. . . .

But farther on he writes in English: "Billy, Billy, are you not a littel to severe, particularly when you talk of the great Sums I have received in this Country?"[22] North's assertion that his present poverty was due, not to the niggardliness of the government, but to his own improvidence, hurt him keenly. Here his best friend had joined his worst enemies in Congress.

A month later he wrote again:

> . . . Could you now really apprehend that . . . I should be affronted with your Observations in the Epistel to Benjamin? No, No, My Dear Boy, in every Sillable, I saw the heart of my friend. . . . I should be very Sorry at your indifference when ever I make a faux pas. . . . Should I ever turn a Miser, warn me; but do it not in the tone of a Prodigal & if you find me Prodigal, write an other Epistel, but not in the tone of a Miser. . . . I know my foible—et I am obliged to a friend when ever he cheks m'y propensity to Prodigality. But Billy, will you not become a Miser? I am really afraid of it—young and prudent—inclines often that

way. Be on your guard. . . . It is the only vice that increeses with Age. . . . Billy, take care not to become a Miser.[23] . . .

On October 1, before he received the "Epistel to Benjamin," the Baron wrote to North:

> . . . Nothing yet from Don Quixote Country, nothing from Congress about my Affairs—if you have more patiance than you want—send me a littel of it.
>
> . . . Coll Morgan* from jersey . . . has laid out an Extensive Plan for a Collonie on the Other Side of the Missisippy. . . . he proposes to Unite with my System. He supplicates for a Seat in my Privi Counsil & for the Directorship of the Customs, etc, etc,—is this not selling the Skin before the Bear is shot? At Least I thought so & accordingly declined to grant these commissions. . . . The Poeple are all Missisippy Mad. If I am so, believe me, my dear Son, it is less for my own Sake than for the interest of my friends. Ambition with all her turbulent train waits for me on the Missisippy & tranquillity with all her charms on Steuben Creek. . . .
>
> I dine constantly with our friend Walker. This are my best Hours of the Day. . . . We are happy, talk a great deal of Bill North, Polly, frederic. . . . Then I go home, amuse myself with Plato, Seneca, tristram Shandy & Pindar. In the Evening I read a chapter in Don Quixote . . . then go to bed. This last I am just now going to do & so good Night.[24]

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* George Morgan of New Jersey.

CHAPTER XLVII

IN THE HANDS OF A RECEIVER

1

OCTOBER, 1788, was a busy month for the Baron. On the twenty-third he wrote to North about a great land speculation with Duer and Armstrong.[1] Duer and his associates had secured a right to buy a great tract of western land from Congress and had arranged for its immediate sale in France.* It was therefore a "sure thing" in the get-rich-quick line. Steuben's share of the profits would be $30,000 within two years. But this was not the only project. He had another that would pay quicker and bigger dividends:

> . . . Another speculation . . . has opened between me and M. Gardoqui.[2] I have asked for a grant of 6,000 acres of land for me and my friends in the neighborhood of Natchez. A man who possessed only 400 acres made a crop of indigo this Spring which brought him 24,000 silver dollars. . . .
>
> . . . Gardoqui has written to the government to ratify the grant and at the same time for a passport and permit so that I can import negroes and other articles necessary for the culture. . . . We can bring in these negroes for 200 dollars each, and as they can be sold in New Orleans or Natchez at $600 per head, it follows that in selling 30 negroes out of 90 that we import, we will have our own 60 negroes for nothing.

The Baron apparently expected Gardoqui to put up the necessary capital as a silent partner, for he assures North that "All this enterprise will cost us no disbursement." He offers to give North a plantation of 800 acres:

> . . . If in place of $24,000, you make only the eighth part of it, that will be $3,000 a year, which should be quite handsome for a

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* Here the Baron refers to Duer's ill-fated Scioto Company.

little seigneur of Douanesburg. But in case you are too mulish to accept it, I shall . . . offer . . . it to my little Frederick. . . .

He then writes in English about his present economies in New York:

> . . . "With these Castels in Air, the Old fool goes still on in his extravagant expenses." So says Billy to Polly. Silence, Mr. Billy, I hear you & to convince you that you are not always in the Right, I join here an Accurate Account of m'y expenses per month.* The jersey Estate must & is to be sold. Walker is m'y administrator, all debts are to be paid out of it. . . . My horses, carriages, Etc. Sold, I walk on foot, Keep littel or no Company. No petit Souper, in short I live & must live poorer than I ever did. . . . Will you be content with your Old & Sincere friend when he gives you the Assurance that all the old depts Shall be paid out of the jersey Estate & no nieu ones Contracted.
>
> . . . Gardoqui expects letters . . . by the London August Packet wich is looked for Every Moment. These letters may bring some Eclaircissement about my Grand Chateau En Espagne. Voila a devillish deal of English.

Then passing to French: "Embrace your good wife for me. Give tender kisses to my little Frederic: scold me always, but do not love me less." On November 8 he again wrote: ". . . No news—No news from La Mancha. If nothing comes befor Cristmas, nothing can be expected from that Quarter."[4] And on the twenty-fourth, at the end of a gloomy letter:

> . . . So fly my days awai my dear Boy, At dinner I laugh a little with Walker and his wife. . . . All Clubs are dismissed—if the players were here I should be tempted. But I have no monney & should even be obliged to renounce this diversion.

* North did not preserve this interesting inclosure but he summarized it in a letter to Walker: ". . . He encloses me a list of his expences for a month which amounts to 15-18-6 [about $40] only, says he wears his old coat—has no new liveries, dines with you & is an œconomist. Writes about his speculations with Duer, Gardoqui & c & seems to be full of affairs. God grant they may turn out as he wishes.—but he is too unsuspecting for Duer. No Spanish packet—Castles in the Air—I am sorry, for it is too cold now to occupy one of them.[3] . . ."

> Oh, Panglos, Panglos, if everything is for the best, it is impossible that my comming to this Country is any thing at all—But stop, stop, where dose my Mysantropie Lead Me—a Billy, his wife, a Frederic, would they have come to Europe to make my acquaintance? No. Panglos thou art Right—Every thing is for the best.[5]

2

ON December 12 he gave North his prognostications as to the personnel of the new Federal Government:

> . . . Every body heer is Occupied to dispose of the Offices. . . . For the great Chair are the Candidates, G. W. or God Almighty, for the Second, Great Adams, . . . Chief Justice, Mr. Jay: Minstre of finances, Hammilton; of Warr, the big book binder [*Knox*] . . . ; of foreign Affairs, perhaps Madisson. . . .

Then comes a reference to another get-rich-quick scheme: ". . . Warville has sailed for Europe. Let his negotiating be successful & all is well!" Here the Baron refers to Brissot de Warville who was scheming with Duer and other promoters to form an international banking house. Apparently the Baron was a shareholder. He welcomed a new speculation for by this time his Mississippi bubble had burst. Gardoqui had given the colonial concession to George Morgan.* But North found one bit of good news in the letter: ". . . My Jersey Estate is sold for twelve honderd £ N. Y. Monney [about $3,000]. Walker and Hammilton are my Administrators."[6]

In making Walker and Hamilton his administrators, the Baron virtually put himself in the hands of a receiver. Hamilton was too busy to give more than his counsel and prestige to the receivership. This left the details of the business to Walker. Apparently the only assets in the receivers' hands were the $3,000 from the Jersey sale. The Baron had recently sold his thoroughbred stallion, Cincinnatus,* for £300.[7] Out of the proceeds he had paid a part of his debt to North. He may have transferred the balance of the "Cincinnatus Fund" to the receivers, but a guess would be that he retained it for "operating expenses."

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* The name of a town in Missouri, New Madrid, is the only remaining vestige of Morgan's colony in New Spain.

3

STEUBEN apparently expected that the proceeds of the Jersey sale would be more than enough to satisfy his creditors. This hope proved to be illusory. His receivers found his schedule of debts far from complete. When it became known that Hamilton was backing an effort to meet his obligations, creditors hitherto unlisted swooped in from every direction. It was now apparent that Walker would be unable to pay a half of the debt. The problem before the receivers was to gain time until the new Congress should pass on the Baron's claims. Otherwise, a forced sale of his New York land might be necessary. Some of the creditors who pressed for immediate payment were bought out by Hamilton and a group of his friends. Other larger creditors were persuaded to join this friendly syndicate. This left a reduced volume of debt, principally in small accounts, for Walker to liquidate. The receivers never made a formal accounting, but the following fragmentary vouchers are suggestive:

1. "Sir, Please pay the bearer the Sum of four pounds one shilling, being the wages and subsistence due to the negro wench to the 25th of Jan^y, 1789.

Steuben

To Coll. Walker."[9]

2. A similar order to pay Isabelle Defo the wages due her on May 12.[10]

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* Here is the biography of Cincinnatus from an old newspaper:[8] "*Cincinnatus* was got by the thoroughbred imported horse Bay Richmond, well known to sportsmen and breeders. His dam was the Blueskin Mare, in a line from Fearnought, Regulus, Godolphin, Arabian. . . . The Blueskin Mare in her prime was a proud winner and a terror to the turf in the Southern States. She was purchased by Gen. Baron Steuben for 1000 dollars." (See page 298.)

3. Steuben instructs Walker to pay a promissory note for 17 £, 5/, which he had issued to William Mooney.[11]

4. "Pay to Baron Steuben or Bearer Ten pounds on account of

Ben Walker
19 June 1789[12]

5. Steuben to Walker, "If my purse is not entirely empty, I beg you, my friend, to send me by Lopez, a little cash. Eight or ten pounds will be sufficient for my present needs."[13]

4

THE Baron looked forward with eagerness to March 4, for on that day the new government would begin to function. But great was his disappointment when he found that the new machinery was unable to move. There was no quorum in either the Senate or the House. Everybody knew that Washington had been unanimously elected President, but until there was a quorum in the Senate, the electoral votes could not be counted. It was not until April 6 that a committee was dispatched to Mount Vernon to notify the new President of his election. The outlook for the speedy conclusion of the Steuben receivership was not encouraging.

The Baron occupied a place of honor on the Inaugural platform when Washington finally took his oath of office on April 30.[14] But though the new government was now installed and though the President showed him every courtesy, no action could be taken on his business. On May 30 he wrote to North:

> I have dined with the great man at a little table with four covers. I have had a talk with him tête a tête for five hours, another for three hours, a horseback ride from nine in the morning until two o'clock.* But in all these conversations I avoided telling him a thing about my affairs. My situation and embarrassments are too small compared with his. . . . The pursuit of my business must be suspended until the great departments of the government are established. . . .

* Washington was consulting his old staff officer on the national defense organization. He considered this, next after the establishment of public credit, the most important problem that confronted his administration.

Walker, his wife and all your friends are well. My love to Polly and Frederic. . . . Adieu my child, I embrace you with all my heart.[15]

On the fourth of July Steuben was reëlected president and Hamilton was elected vice-president of the New York Cincinnati. After the election, a committee comprising the president, the vice-president and three other members waited upon the President of the United States and paid him the compliments of the Society. On August 25 Steuben submitted his memorial with a "State of Facts" to both houses of Congress.[16] No action was possible at that time. Congress was still busy with the fundamental organization of the new government. On September 11 Hamilton was appointed to head the new Treasury Department. Two weeks later the House of Representatives "*Resolved*, that the memorial of Baron DE STEUBEN be referred to the secretary of the Treasury to report thereupon to the next session of Congress." Though it postponed action until next January, this resolution was auspicious for the Baron. His attorney would now be his judge. The editor, if not the author, of his memorial would interpret that document to Congress. But, no doubt, Hamilton welcomed a brief delay. Steuben was not his only bankrupt client. The most insolvent corporation in the world, the new American nation, had just retained him to adjust its financial affairs.

5

SOMETIME during the summer, Polly North and little Frederick went to New York on a visit, leaving Billy busy with his farm. Toward the end of August, Polly's first daughter was born. Before Polly was strong enough to return to Duanesburg, Frederick became seriously ill and died about September 10. The Baron grieved for this child as for his own grandson. When Polly started home about ten days later, North met her on the way. He wrote to the Baron from a sloop on the Hudson:

. . . Mrs. North's letter was the first which gave me notice. The

> first words were . . . "Our Frederick is no more." I can not tell you my feelings. . . . Monday [Sept. 21], I set out by stage for Livingston Manor where I took boat & after rowing about 30 miles down the river, met the sloop in which Polly was. We are now with our child (alas! we have but one) above Hudson on our way to our Hut. . . . The little girl exceeds my expectations.[17] . . .

The Baron was so concerned for his bereaved children that he took Polly Walker with him on a journey to Duanesburg. Soon after their arrival, North wrote to Walker: "Your wife . . . & the Baron have made us really happy by this unexpected visit."[18] Two weeks later the Baron described his return journey to North:

> After a journey of nine days by water and land we reached New York by the stage coach. The trip from Albany . . . was very disagreeable. My aide-de-camp, Polly Walker, has learned to swear very correctly. "This beef is devillish tof. This grog is devillish strong, etc." She curses like a grenadier.* . . . The quarrels we had in the course of the journey are forgotten, but the joy I had in your society is not. If Walker had been with us I would readily have consented . . . to renounce the entire world for the society of my dear children.[19] . . .

During the month of November the Baron lived quietly in New York: "I dine either with our friends the Walkers or with Hamilton. The evenings I pass quietly at home, where the reading of a good book and a mug of punch are my consolation." At this time he expected that Congress would act on his claim early in January. He would then be able to determine "Whether my old bones are to be interred on the shore of the Mohawk or that of the Rhine."[20] On the evening of December 1 he went to the play as the guest of President and Mrs. Washington. On the third and again on New Year's Eve he was among their guests at dinner.[21]

* This charge of profanity is pure slander. The old letter is endorsed in another hand, probably Polly North's: "What respects Polly Walker is a pleasantry. She was a Quaker and never used improper words. The Baron loved to laugh at and with her."

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE BARON'S PENSION

1

CONGRESS reconvened in January, 1790, but there was no immediate action on the Baron's claim. On February 28 he wrote to North, "I flatter myself my business will be settled next week."[1] Again there was delay. It was not until March 29 that the secretary of the treasury completed his report on Steuben's memorial. After reviewing all the evidence relating to the alleged contract, Hamilton submitted to Congress:

> . . . That the statement made by the memorialist of what passed at Yorktown is authenticated by such strong, direct, and collateral evidence as ought, in the opinion of the Secretary to secure full credit of the existence of the fact. . . .
>
> The Secretary is of the opinion that, whether the transaction relied upon by the baron be deemed to have the force of a contract or not, it will be most consistent with the dignity and equity of the United States to admit it as the basis of a final adjustment of his claims. . . . According to this principle, the Secretary has caused an account to be stated, . . . upon which statement there is a balance in his favor for seven thousand three hundred and ninety six dollars and seventy-four ninetieths.
>
> In addition to this he would be entitled, for the remainder of his life, to the yearly sum of five hundred and eighty guineas. . . .

The secretary concluded by suggesting that "There is good ground to believe that the above-mentioned balance will be short of a sufficient sum to discharge the debts now owing by the memorialist.[2] . . ." As Hamilton was the Baron's legal adviser, his principal creditor and a copartner with the other creditors, he might have made this last statement more positively.

On April 19, the House instructed a committee to report a bill "in conformity with the report of the Secretary of the Treasury." After acrimonious debate* this bill was passed May 10 granting Steuben a lump sum of $7,000 and a life annuity of $2,000 from January 1, 1790. In the Senate, the lump sum was stricken out and the annuity raised to $2,500. The House accepted the Senate's amendments and the final act was approved by President Washington, June 4, 1790.

2

THE Pension Act was a serious blow to the "Steuben Receivership." On June 12 North heard from Walker that Congress had refused to allow the lump sum of $7,000. There would therefore be no reimbursement for the friendly syndicate that Hamilton had formed to underwrite the Baron's debts. And worse still, the debts were considerably bigger than North had expected. It was very clear to Billy how this new crisis must be met. Land must be sold immediately to pay the debts and the Baron must be made to live within his annuity in the future. A budget must be made for him and he must be made to keep it balanced. As North was expecting his old chief to visit Duanesburg in a few days on his way up the Mohawk Valley, he decided to have his budget all ready for him. But suppose the Baron should postpone his journey and remain in New York long enough to commit some new financial folly? There was only one way to meet this contingency. Billy must write another "Epistel to Benjamin" and Benjamin must transmit it to the Baron. Here is the gist of North's letter written that same day:

> . . . 2500 dollars a year is all we can ever hope for from the Generosity or Justice of the United States! This sum must pay his way through life & with other means get him clear of debt. Let us then go into a Committee of Ways & Means, if possible to

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* There was great popular opposition to the pension. In a newspaper article by "A Republican" published shortly after its passage we find: "Who pays this Sum?—The people either directly or indirectly—Of the inhabitants who shall contribute to this, not one third are individually possessed of as much property as this pensioner receives annually."[3]

> emancipate &, what is more difficult, to keep him free in future. . . .
>
> Steuben I look upon as the most valuable of his tracts. . . . If his debts must be paid immediately, it must be sold in New York at what it will bring, perhaps not 4/.*

But if they could gain a little time they might get Barlow (the Paris agent of Duer's Scioto Company) to sell the Pennsylvania land in Europe for $3,000. Unfortunately, the deeds to the Virginia lands had not yet been issued. He continues,

> But 3000 dollars will not do. Delenda est Carthago. Steuben must be sold & sold if possible in Europe. There are a thousand reasons . . . for selling this hobby horse. Tis a beast that would eat him out of house & home & never be fit to ride till our friend is in the other world.† . . .

After further consideration he is convinced that if Cockburn's best map of Steuben could be sent to Barlow it might be possible to sell 10,000 acres for more than enough to pay the debts. This would leave 6,000 acres for the Baron to play with. North suggests that if the Scioto Company can get 8*s*. an acre "for lands on the Ohio or the Lord knows where, merely on Barlow's word that there is such a place," such land as the Baron's, "so situated, so watered, so warranted" and "so near New York," should bring 20*s*. per acre—but only in Europe.[4]

Billy finished this letter abruptly as he had an unexpected chance to send it to the Albany post office via "Schenectada." The next day he resumed:

> The greatest difficulty remains. I mean the regulation of his expences in the future. 2500 dollars is sufficient for his yearly expences, provided he pays for everything down & does not eat the calf in the cows belly. . . . System is the life of everything & a system he must adopt . . . and resolve like a man to abide by it. We have a right to demand this of him & he must agree to it, or he will be wanting in friendship for us, who feel so much for him. . . . He may call me miser . . . but I can not forget his ill timed

---

* Four shillings or fifty cents per acre. This would bring in $8,000.

† Sizer was still working at Steuben but with very limited resources.

expences. . . . We will talk no more of the past, but look forward to a System by which he may live like a gentleman & be free—for I hold the man a Slave who is in debt without means of payment. . . .

8 months in the gay world & 4 in retirement in the country—a carriage, pair of horses & two servants—2 suits of cloths per year & the necessaries. A bedroom, a parlour & a library—Servants, board wages—his coffee the only provision he should make himself . . . his dinners by Francis [Fraunces] . . . sent to his rooms. He hates to eat alone—let him now and then have a friend—(Not Duer or Armstrong; the one yet owes him money & the other who said his motive for living with the Baron was to lessen his expence, never paid his part. . . . A shame of such gentlemen. Let such gentlemen and such friends go to Hell.) Even petit soupers once a week for 4 or 5—certainly not more than 6—might be allowed. By this means he would pay his dinner debts &c. . . . There will be other expences. . . . But supposing his debts paid & carriage &c, bought, let us see to what the other things would amount.

3 rooms, 50 £ per an. Horse-keeping 50 £. 8 months suppers is 32 (for 6 persons on an average, wine included, at 10 dollars each) . . ., 128 £. Suppose he dines at home 3 times a week (sometimes alone, sometimes a friend), say 140 din^{rs}, wine included, a dollar each, 56 £. 2 servants & Board for 12 mos. say, 80 £. 2 suits livery, say £ 16. 1 dress suit & one plain for himself, yearly, say 40 £. These sums . . . amount to 420 £ which leaves him 580 £ to sport with. . . . In fact, if he will make a reasonable plan & stick to it (But there is the rub), he can live on 2500 dollars like a Prince & keep out of debt. But if he goes heals over head as formerly—His friends and character will both forsake him. . . .

I dont know what to write more about him—in fact, our letters are filled with nothing else. We love him & he deserves it for he loves us tenderly. I wish to God he was as much . . . a miser as he charges me with being & I pray God we may all meet again out of debt. . . . Amen. So be it, Lord Jesus.[5]

3

As soon as the Pension Act passed, the Baron prepared to visit his estate on the Mohawk. But before leaving New York he made payments to some of his creditors. He now had some ready money with more in sight. His first quarterly instalment of $625 was due on the passage of the Act. The second instalment would be payable July 1. His diary shows that he drew $500 from the bank and applied most of it to current accounts—among them $30 and *6s.* for his laundress since January 5. He also gave Walker an order for $750 payable July 1, with orders to pay certain tradesmen—among them his tailor who was to receive $135 "on account" of his bill for $329.19.*[6]

On June 16, the Baron reached Duanesburg on his way to his domain. As the "Epistels to Benjamin" had passed him on the way, we may be sure that Billy submitted their purport with full emphasis to his guest. Apparently his strictures on debt made some impression for the night of his arrival the Baron wrote in his diary: "Paid to Major North $100 on account of $130 which I owe him."

He found his affairs at Steuben in a bad way. In his diary on June 26 we find the following account of Samuel Sizer's stewardship:

> . . . I have no reason to be pleased with his conduct. . . . The mill is no further along than a year ago. The mill dam is broken down and probably no sawing can be done for three months. Consequently the West House† is not finished for lack of planks. Not an acre of the "Sixty Acres" is properly cleared and prepared for the plow. The boat I left in his care is lost through his negligence. The trail to Nine-Mile Creek [which Sizer had opened three years before] . . . is overgrown from lack of clearing. . . . Finally, he has not set a foot beyond the clearing. Instead of attracting settlers to Steuben, by his indifference, he has discouraged those who have already settled. . . .

The Baron now took personal charge of the operations on his estate. He put men to work to repair the milldam. In order to expedite the cultivation of the partially cleared "Sixty Acres,"* he divided it into small tracts for assignment to tenants. Each tenant was to prepare his tract of land for the plow and to do his share in building rail fences. For this he would receive 15*s.* per acre in cash, the wheat crop in 1791 and the hay crop in 1792.

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* This was apparently a new extravagance, for North referred to this bill with great indignation in his last "Epistel to Benjamin."

† A tenant house that Sizer had been instructed to build.

He employed a surveyor to explore a water route from Herkimer to Steuben via West Canada, Cincinnati and Steuben creeks. As the last two streams were found to be too small for navigation except at high water, he had a cart road surveyed and cut out to the mouth of Cincinnati Creek, seven and a half miles from "Sixty." On June 3 he made a contract for a new frame house to be finished within a year. On the Fourth of July the Baron recorded in his diary: "Sunday being the anniversary of Independence day, I gave a dinner to all the people who are on my land." Five settlers came from Fort Stanwix to take farms on July 9. By that time twelve farms had been leased and six sold in fee simple.†

The Baron was now prepared to call Sizer to account for his laches during the past two years. But that gentleman had counterclaims to submit. He admitted that he had been ordered to clear and fence lands, to install mills, to establish a "potashery," to open roads, to build bridges, to erect houses and to act as colonizing agent. He had sold his home in Massachusetts and had moved his family to Steuben. If he had not done all the work assigned him his resources had been too limited. In fact, he had made advances in his patron's behalf from his own limited capital. The Baron conceded that he had not sent Sizer as much cash as he had intended, but he had given him full power to finance his operations from the revenues of his baronial domain. He had authorized him to collect and disburse the profits from the mills and the potashery together with the proceeds from land sales. If Sizer was short of capital it was because he lacked the financial genius to develop these abundant sources of wealth.

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* A dense growth of brush had grown up since the big trees were felled in 1787.

† The old deeds show that it was Steuben's plan to grant most of his farms on perpetual lease. The rental for the first four years was to be 3*s.* per 100 acres and after that $15 per 100 acres. This form of tenure had come down from early Colonial days. It prevailed at Duanesburg and on other great estates. Each of Steuben's tenants was bound to plant and maintain an orchard of grafted apple trees—at least one tree for each acre in his farm. In order to raise funds to meet current expenses, he proposed to sell a few farms in fee simple.

But Sizer stood his ground. Until his wages were paid and his advances reimbursed, he claimed the ownership of the sawmill. The Baron finally grasped Sam's philosophy of the mechanic's lien and settled on July 11 by agreeing to give Sizer:

1. One of his best farms, 113½ acres, in fee simple, a barrel of pork worth $15, a barrel of flour worth $5, and $20 in cash.
2. The proceeds of the sawmill for eighteen months, Sizer to finish the mill and to furnish enough planks for the Baron's proposed new house.
3. The right to finish the "West House" and to occupy it with his family until June 1, next.
4. Six acres of partially cleared land in "Sixty" subject to the conditions applying to other tenants.
5. "A coat, a suit and a hat" for Sizer's eldest son.

4

AFTER his settlement with Sizer, Steuben made Colonel Colbrath of Fort Stanwix his agent. In order to attract settlers, Colbrath was authorized to grant leases for $10 instead of $15 until the next June and to sell not more than ten farms at 8*s.* ($1) an acre. On July 18, the Baron set out on his return journey, traveling by canoe down Nine-Mile Creek to the Mohawk. From North's he wrote to Walker that the Pennsylvania land must be sold to pay off a part of his debts, and the Virginia land also as soon as the patents were received. Given time, he would be able to pay the balance by the gradual sale of land at Steuben. If his creditors would agree to this he was willing to apply a part of his pension to the payment of interest. "Have a conference with my friend Hammilton on this subject."[7]

After his visit with Polly and Billy, the Baron expected to spend about ten days with "Ranselear"* at Albany and about the same time at Livingston Manor, then after other visits with old friends, he would get to New York about the middle of September.

He wrote North from New York: ". . . Hammilton & Walker have investigated my private business affairs and find that all my debts do not amount to $7,000. It has been decided to arrange with my creditors. A mortgage is to be given on my lands at Steuben. . . ." Walker and his wife, he informs North, have sailed for London. Duer is sending Walker abroad on business in connection with the Scioto Company. He is to have his expenses paid and "a share" of 50,000 acres for his own account. He will also try to sell the Baron's Pennsylvania and Virginia lands.

> If he succeeds in this, I will save correspondingly at Steuben. This is without considering my own share in the Scioto Company.† . . .
>
> Since Walker's departure I dine with Madame Daubigny. I pay her $4 a week. That is pretty steep but it is better than keeping house. . . . I still keep my apartment at Dr. Tillery's [at the southeast corner of Broadway and Wall Street]. I am quite well physically and dont trouble my brains with metaphysics.[8] . . .

The mortgage on the New York land was finally drawn by Alexander Hamilton and executed October 19, 1790.‡ It was a friendly mortgage designed to protect the Baron from losses incident to a forced sale. A fifth part of his pension, $500 per year, was set apart for the payment of interest. Until the whole debt should be paid, the proceeds of all land sales were to go to Alexander Macomb who was to act as trustee for the other creditors. Macomb was empowered, however, to authorize the Baron to apply a portion of the proceeds to approved improvements on the property.[9]

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* Stephen van Rensselaer of Rensselaerswyck.

† Walker spent the winter of 1790–91 abroad. His mission was unsuccessful.

‡ In an attached schedule the creditors are listed: Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, £454–16–8¾; Alexander Macomb, 118–13–4; Brockholst Livingston, 117–1–6; William Edgar, 118–13–4; Nicholas Fish, 118–11–8; Alexander Hamilton, 704–0–0; John Myers, 160–0–0; Christopher L. Lente, 300–0–0; Benjamin Walker, 179–12–0; the total is £2271–7–6¾, New York money or about $5,700.

CHAPTER XLIX

FARMING BY ARITHMETIC

1

THE Norths spent a part of the winter of 1790–91 in New York, where a son was born to them. Sometime in February Billy returned alone to Duanesburg. On the twenty-seventh the Baron wrote him news of his family:

> My friend: With much satisfaction, I announce to you that your wife is much better than when you left. . . . Yesterday we received your son into the communion of Christians and as you gave me full power to give him a name I chose that of Holofernes* who was, as you know, a great Assyrian General—strong in the field of Mars but a bit weak in that of Venus. . . . Your little boy is pretty. He laughed like a little rascal when they made him a Christian. I couldn't tell whether he was making fun of the bishop or of me.[1] . . .

2

THE Baron set out for Steuben on May 7. He met Colonel Colbrath, his agent, at Fort Stanwix, and rode with him to "Sixty" on the eighteenth. "I was far," he records in the diary, "from finding things in the condition I had hoped." The "West House" was still unfinished. No work had been done on the roads, the sawmill was still unroofed and out of repair. As no planks had been sawed, no work had been done on the frame house he had contracted for last year. He therefore put three men to work to make the log house more habitable. Little had been done to make "Sixty" ready for the plow. Illness in Sizer's family had made it impossible for him to keep his engagements. Nine of last year's tenants had not returned to their claims.[2]

On May 23 the Baron hired three men to work on the sawmill and three more to work on the neglected roads. The next day he was taken with a severe cold and was ill for more than a week. While confined to his room he commenced an elaborate computation of the future profits of his estate. In order to procure reliable data for this agricultural prognosis, he prepared lists of questions which he submitted to Colonel Colbrath and a number of his employees. The following are a few questions and answers taken from Sam Sizer's questionnaire:

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* This appears to be one of the Baron's pleasantries. All other documents indicate that the infant was named James, for his grandfather Duane.

Q. The Saw Mill being in perfect Ordre, How many feet of board can be Sawd in 24 hours?
A. The mill . . . will saw in 24 Hours, 800 feet of Boards. . . .
Q. What is the currant priess of a 1000f. of Board?
A. . . . 5 D.
Q. . . . What number of hands will a farmer requier for the cultivation of the Land (*60 acres*) & attending the Mill?
A. To Saw & Cultivate the 60 Acres will requier 3 man & a Boy.
Q. How many Yoak of Oxen for the Same Objects?
A. Three Yoak of Oxen will be needed.
Q. What are the wages of a Man hired by the year?
A. . . . 60 D.
Q. . . . of a boy . . . ?
A. . . . 30 D.
Q. . . . of a woman . . . ?
A. . . . 26 D.
Q. What quantity of Salt Pork & of flower will be requisite for six months for a familly of 6 persons . . . ?
A. Two Barrils of Pork & Six of flower.
Q. How manny Boushels of Wheat may be the produce of one acre . . . ?
A. . . . 15 Boushell . . . on an Everage. . . .
Q. What is the Value of a Boushel of wheat on this Spot or in the neighborhood?
A. The Value of a B. of Wheat, 6/.[3] . . .

3

DURING the next ten days the Baron was busy comparing questionnaires and computing costs and profits. His diary is full of calculations and tentative drafts of his farm prospectus. On June 7 Benjamin Wright came up from Fort Stanwix to do some surveying.* The next day Steuben put him to work translating his agricultural air castle into English. This optimistic document bears the title: "Prospectus for the Establishment of My Home Estate at Steuben with the Progressive Operations, Expences, Produce & Profets from this Period to the Compleat accomplishment in the Year 1796."[4]

The "Progressive Operations" may be summarized as follows:

This year, 1791, the rest of "Sixty" is to be cleared and plowed, 32 acres are to be seeded to wheat. A yoke of oxen, a cow, a plow and a harrow are to be bought. Total outlay, including wages and provisions for three men will be $315.

1792. Thirty-two acres in hay. Thirty more to be cleared and seeded to wheat. The sawmill to be rebuilt early in the spring.† A barn and two hay sheds to be built. Another yoke of oxen, another cow and more farm implements are to be bought. Total expenditure for the year, $1,011. *But now there will be income to offset part of the outlay.* The lumber from the sawmill will bring *at least* $300 and the crops will bring *at least* $457. The net deficit will therefore be not more than $252.

1793. Thirty more acres to be cleared and seeded. Another yoke of oxen to be bought and a gristmill to be installed for $400. Total outlay for the year $1,172 (*at most*). Income from the sawmill $600 (*at least*), from the crops $950 (*at least*). Net income at least $378.

1794. Fifty more acres to be cleared. Gross expenditure $1,034. Gross income from crops $1,775; from the sawmill, $600; from the gristmill, $300. Net income, $1,641.

By 1796, the "Progressive Operations" will attain their

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* Wright was a youth of twenty-one at that time. Later he became a distinguished engineer and had a prominent part in the location and construction of the Erie Canal.

† An expert millwright had just reported that the whole plan of the existing sawmill was faulty.

"Compleat Accomplishment." The Home Farm will then comprise 616 acres in woodland and 176 acres in arable land, meadow, garden, orchard, etc., and the income account will then be:

Income

Produce of the farm	$1,825.00
Income from the gristmill	300.00
Income from the sawmill	600.00
Rentals from farms on perpetual lease	510.00
Total	$3,235.00

Expenses

Wages for the overseer and his wife	$ 200.00
Wages for two farm hands and two plow boys	168.00
Wages for a man and boy at the mills	126.00
Subsistence for the employees	300.00
Incidental Expenses	80.00
Total	$ 874.00

The apparent net income will therefore be $2,361, but the Baron remarks: "As all the Expences in this Evaluation are Calculated at the highest, and all proceeds at the Lowest Rate it seems that the Clear Income of the Estate may be placed at 2500 Dollars pr. Annum."

4

Colbrath was a guest at "Sixty" from June 10 to 12. During this visit the Baron gave him a copy of his plan of "Progressive Operations" with full power to carry it into effect. He was instructed to sell not over thirty-one farm lots (about 3,100 acres) at $1 per acre in cash (or $1.25 on three years' time with interest). The proceeds were to be paid to Alexander Macomb for application to the mortgage. He was also authorized to sell three other farms to raise funds for current expenses. He was to act as the Baron's disbursing agent and was to receive a commission of 5 per cent on all land sales and 10 per cent of the income from the farm and sawmill for two years. One of the tenants, G. Morgan, was placed in immediate charge of the estate, subject to Colbrath's orders.[5] With two laborers he was to occupy the "West House" and proceed with the land clearing during the winter.

The Baron left Steuben June 14 but returned late in August to observe progress and to make arrangements for the installation of the new sawmill. There are no details of this visit in the diary, but an appended memorandum tells us that before he left in September he had given Colbrath cash and accounts receivable amounting to $568 with instructions to make certain disbursements: "besides, he is to supply Morgan . . . with the provisions needed for the winter and to pay all the little bills against me . . ."[6]

On November 4 President Washington had occasion to record his opinion of Steuben's military character and record. When news came that St. Clair had been defeated by the Indians in Ohio, it became the President's duty to select a new commander. He therefore made a list of all the prominent veterans of the war with his personal appraisal of their qualifications for command. In this list we find:

> *Maj. Gen^{l} Baron de Steuben.*
>
> Sensible, sober and brave; well acquainted with tactics and with the arrangement and discipline of an army. High in his ideas of subordination—impetuous in his temper—ambitious—and a foreigner.

After weighing all possible candidates, Washington appointed Anthony Wayne to be the new commander in the west.

CHAPTER L

"SIXTY"

1

THE Baron's next winter in New York was uneventful. On May 14, 1792, news came from Duanesburg that little James North was seriously ill. Two days later he learned that the child was dead. ". . . God! To what trials is mankind exposed," he wrote to Billy.

> All the reason that Providence gives us hardly suffices to support us in calamities such as you are bearing. What can I say, my beloved friend? . . . I can only pray that you and your . . . dear wife may not succomb under so terrible a sorrow. . . . In the name of God, my very dear North, muster all the resources of your mind . . . for your poor wife, for the child that remains to you and for your friends. If it were possible I would fly to you instead of sending this letter. But I must postpone my departure to the end of this month. . . . Are we in the best possible world? I do not believe it. . . . I long to mingle my tears with yours.[1]

In his farm journal for 1792 the Baron gives no details of his journey up to Steuben. He probably sailed up to Albany as usual and visited his bereaved children at Duanesburg before he went up the Mohawk. His first diary entry records his arrival at Fort Schuyler where he had discouraging news from his estate. On June 27 he writes in his diary:

> . . . Morgan . . . gave me the following account. . . . That since my departure in Sept. of last year, Colbrath has not once been to Steuben; that on all the sums assigned for payment he had paid nothing; that the provisions at Steuben were all consumed, and that nobody would furnish the least thing on my credit. . . . That Colbrath returned all requests, declaring that he had no money of mine on hand.[2] . . .

He arrived at his log house on the afternoon of the twenty-eighth. There had been little progress in preparing the land for the plow. On the thirtieth Morgan presented a bill for $252 for the wages due him and his two men since September. Thereupon the Baron sent a peremptory summons to Colbrath to report to him at once. The colonel returned word that his duties as sheriff would detain him for more than a week. The Baron then wrote a letter canceling all the powers he had extended to his agent. On July 10 the diary informs us:

> Mr. Colbrath arrived. He rendered the accounts to Mr. Mulligan* and appeared a little nettled. The receipts he produced prove that he had neglected my interests. To avoid all quibbling I passed them just as they were. After all the receipts were produced there was still due me about $35. I proposed in the presence of Mr. Mulligan to give him a general quittance. He did not appear satisfied with this, stating that four times this sum would not be enough to recompense him for his trouble. . . . I offered to add 65 guilders more to make it $100. But as he still seemed dissatisfied, I dismissed him with the assurance that I would think over what I owed him. . . . Thereupon he returned to Fort Stanwix.[3]

Colbrath probably had good cause to feel a "little nettled." The Baron had given him onerous tasks with little means to execute them. He was a disbursing agent with limited funds to disburse. He was expected to visit Steuben's domain every fortnight with no prospect of compensation except a sales commission on lands that would not sell† and 10 per cent of the revenues of a farm and mill that did not pay a farthing. He might well complain that four times $35 would not compensate him for his trouble.

2

THE Baron now decided to take personal charge of his estate. The day after Colbrath's dismissal he wrote to Walker that while he had not yet sold much land he was hopeful for the future. Next year it would be easy to sell 12,000 acres for from $15,000 to $18,000.

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* John W. Mulligan, a young graduate of Columbia College, who had recently become Steuben's secretary and companion.

† In April, 1792, there were only fifteen families in the whole settlement and most of these were renters.[4]

> My farm, although neglected by Mr. Colbrath begins to promise a little revenue for next year. There will be a crop from 75 acres. . . . But this harvest will not be enough to finance the coach for Madame [Mrs. Walker]. It must pay for a grist mill and a barn. . . . So, tell Madame that she must go on foot until after the harvest of 1794.[5] . . .

During this summer the Baron took steps to awaken a community interest among his tenants. On July 2, an expert millwright made an estimate for the construction of a new dam for the sawmill and a flume for the proposed gristmill. He reported that the work would require 230 man-days of labor and 20 days' work for a yoke of oxen. As this improvement would benefit all of his colonists, the Baron assembled them and proposed that they should all contribute their labor subject to future reimbursement from the income of the mills. To this the tenants agreed. Later he assembled his colonists and proposed that three committees should be formed; one to act on the mills, another on the road to German Flats, and another on a grammar school for the children of the colony. In order to aid the latter enterprise, the lord of the manor offered a garden and free pasturage for the schoolmaster; $20 in silver and 12 bushels of wheat per year for his subsistence; the building material for the schoolhouse and the master's cottage and the tuition fees for four pupils. He also proposed that a general committee should be elected to confer with him on the affairs of the settlement every Saturday afternoon during his residence on his domain.[6]

3

NORTH visited the Baron in August. On his return he wrote to Walker:

> My dear Ben: I have been to Steuben and over your lots.* They

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* The Baron had deeded 600 acres to the Norths just west of his home farm and 400 acres to the Walkers just to the east of it.

are good. I have offered the first crop and 25/ per acre cash to any one who will clear 10 acres on yours and the same on mine. . . . The Baron will not be down till the 15th Sept. He will then stay some little time with me, go to Armstrong and the Livingstons for a fortnight and then to you.

. . . Land at Steuben sells at 10/ cash. I saw the Baron take money for two farms at that price. I dont know how it is—but fear he is and will be all eternity, eating the calf in the cow's belly. I talked to Mulligan about it—but he is but a boy. I begged the Baron to stay some months with me. . . . I wished his debts paid,* which could only be done by saving expense. He won't. What can be done?[7] . . .

Steuben spent part of the winter of 1792–93 in Philadelphia, the new national capital, where he was fêted by his old friends. From New York, on March 27, he sent a gardener up the Mohawk with plants and fruit trees for his garden at "Sixty."[8] There are no diary entries for this year, and so no details of his own journey to Steuben. But he left New York before the Fourth of July, for at their banquet on that day, the Cincinnati drank to "Our absent President, the Baron de Steuben. May the Citizens of America never be unmindful of his distinguished services in the cause of freedom."[9] He spent a lonely summer in his log house. On August 11 he wrote to Walker:

. . . Since your departure from here, I have seen no one, and the bad weather has prevented my proposed excursion. I was reduced to entertain myself with the heroes and rascals of antiquity. But all their great exploits are not worth the three days . . . we enjoyed together in my woods. God bless you for that charitable visit. You have certainly acquired more merit by it than if you had made the pilgrimage to Mecca or the Loretto.

. . . My gristmill advances and I hope to see it finished before my departure. I hope you did not forget to deposit those 400 florins for me at the bank in Albany . . . I count on that sum for payment on the mill.

---

* He had been acquiring new debts since Hamilton executed the friendly mortgage.

Then after referring to an advance of some money to young Mulligan: "My heart has always been bigger than my purse. That lack of prudence has often put me in embarrassment. I hope he will profit by my example.[10] . . ." North did not ride up to "Sixty" that summer. He was sick up at Lebanon Springs. On August 22 he wrote to Walker:

> . . . With a poultice on one of my fingers and many boils on my back side, I set sorely on a pillow attempting to scrawl a letter to my friend. . . . When well enough to set on a saddle, I shall set out for my wife and children.[11] . . .

As Billy's last word is in the plural the reader will infer that Polly had had a new baby since the death of little James. And the inference is correct, for William Augustus Steuben North was born on February 1.

4

DURING this year the Baron's domain grew less isolated. The Holland Land Company of Rotterdam had purchased a great tract of land between the Steuben grant and Fort Schuyler. Gerrit Boon, the agent of the company, established its headquarters at the junction of Steuben and Cincinnati creeks and gave the new settlement the name of Olden Barneveld. As Boon had ample capital at his disposal he proposed to construct a road from the new settlement to the Mohawk. This simplified the Baron's transportation problem. A road from "Sixty" to Olden Barneveld would now connect him with the outer world. He remained at "Sixty" this year until well into the autumn. In December he met Messieurs Pharoux and Desjardins in New York. These gentlemen were the advance agents of the Castorland Company, a French corporation which had recently purchased a great tract of land in the Black River Valley. There the company proposed to establish a colony for refugees who sought escape from the disturbances in revolutionary France. After meeting the Baron, Desjardins recorded in the *Castorland Journal:* "Made the acquaintance of Baron Steuben . . .

who engaged us to make the Castorland road by way of his patent, and offered to pay his share and to aid us as far as he was able.”[12] Here the Baron took another step toward bringing “Sixty” into communication with the outer world.

CHAPTER LI

STEUBEN MANOR

1

EARLY in the spring of 1794, as war with England seemed imminent, the Baron made a plan for the defense of New York Harbor, proposing fortifications where Forts Hamilton and Wadsworth were constructed many years later.[1] On March 26 the legislature created a commission to prepare a system of defenses for the northern and western frontiers of the state. Steuben was appointed chairman of this commission with North as one of its members.

He went up to "Sixty" early in May. Desjardins of the Castorland Company arrived the nineteenth, and recorded in his journal:

> We . . . arrived at five in the afternoon after going astray in the woods. . . . I was disappointed in not finding either the Baron or Mr. Mulligan, but only servants, who seeing us . . . covered with mud to the chin, did not make haste to receive us. At last the gardener remembered having seen me in better plight at the Baron's house in New York. . . . They then invited us in, but said no one could enter the Baron's chamber. They made up a bed in the garret and proposed that I should sleep with Baptiste [Desjardin's servant]. . . . When I asked the gardener if he slept with the Baron, they saw their error and made apologies.[2]

At this time the Baron's mansion was a log house with a log lean-to at the rear. It contained two rooms, one in the main house and one in the lean-to. There was also a garret where his servants slept.

Desjardins spent several days at "Sixty" waiting for his ox-cart to make its way from Fort Schuyler. Apparently Steuben's servants became more hospitable, for the third day he records in the Journal: "I spent my time reading Montesquieu which

I found on a shelf in the Baron's room." The oxcart finally arrived, having taken five days for the twenty-four-mile journey, and "tipped over twice on the way." After pitching a tent for his men, Desjardins records:

> Scarcely had these arrangements been made when our worthy host arrived with Mr. Mulligan. He had been away on a tour to look after the safety of the frontiers. . . . He received us with all his German hospitality and made us sensible of the pleasure of finding ourselves in the company of an old warrior, both intelligent and amiable. His conversation was pleasing and instructive.[3]

Desjardins secured Steuben's permission to establish an advance base for the Castorland Company at "Sixty," and on the twenty-fifth returned to Fort Schuyler to arrange for the transportation of supplies. Half way to Olden Barneveld, he met Gerrit Boon, General Mappa and three other gentlemen on their way to dine with the Baron. The general and his family had recently settled at Olden Barneveld. A little later he succeeded Boon as general agent of the Holland Company. When Desjardins arrived at the new settlement he found:

> A large clearing, a forge, a sawmill, a fine two-story frame house with all the conveniences of a city home, fine vegetable gardens, log houses, etc., all a great credit to Mr. Boon's industry. . . . Madame Mappa received me *de son mieux*, speaking French as did all her family. Her husband, the *ci-devant* Dutch General of the Revolution was exiled like all other leaders of the Republican party.[4] . . .

No doubt the development of this thriving settlement was a good omen to the Baron. It brought the comforts and luxuries of civilization to within seven miles of "Sixty."

After engaging oxcarts at Fort Schuyler, Desjardins returned to "Sixty" on foot. He was "tormented by black flies" and "frequently mired." On June 4 he records:

> The Baron's log house was for me the desired haven, and I came in sight of it just as I supposed myself lost. . . . I found a good

> dinner which after my forced abstinence . . . and weariness . . . appeared even more excellent.[5]

He now built a log storehouse near Steuben's cabin and sent workmen to cut out the road to Castorland. On the fifteenth Pharoux arrived to take charge of the expedition and the whole Castorland party set out on the nineteenth for their domain in the Black River Valley.

2

While Desjardins was building his log storehouse, the Baron went down to Schenectady to attend a meeting of the frontier defense commissioners.[6] There it was decided that he and North and Stephen van Rensselaer should visit the western frontier. A few days later they were joined by Mulligan and Lemuel Hough, one of the Baron's workmen, and set out toward Fort Oswego. This post, though within the territory of the United States, was still occupied by a British garrison. The party proceeded via Fort Stanwix and Oneida Lake to Salt Point on Lake Onondaga. There, after a conference with friendly Indians, they decided to build a blockhouse. Upon their return journey, according to Kapp, the Baron barely escaped capture by a party of hostile Indians sent out from Fort Oswego for that purpose.*[7] Soon after this journey the threat of war was ended by Jay's treaty with Great Britain.

A local historian gives us a glimpse of the Baron on his return trip from Onondaga. The commissioners spent the first night at John Schaeffer's log tavern at Manlius. They were given beds in the garret:

> The Baron was greatly annoyed during the night, so that he scarcely slept a wink. The frequent shutting of doors, continual tramping of busy feet, and hushed sounds of female voices, . . . kept his mind in a continual tumult. . . . He often turned himself

---

* Kapp gives no authority for this story. He probably got it verbally from Mulligan and Hough who were still living when he wrote his book. The *Castorland Journal* refers to a report, that summer, that Steuben had been killed by the Indians.

> on his bed of straw seeking rest and finding none. . . . He finally worked himself into an almost uncontrollable passion which could scarcely be restrained till morning. On the earliest approach of light the Baron rose, still in rage, vowing vengeance on all below.

While he was giving a piece of his mind to the landlord, a woman approached bearing Mrs. Schaeffer's newborn son in her arms. "Here, Sir Baron," she said, "is the cause of all the trouble and noise last night." The gallant old soldier made the most handsome apologies. He forthwith deeded a farm to the infant, who later was christened Baron Steuben Schaeffer.[8]

An old newspaper gives us another glimpse of Steuben on this journey: "July 1, 1794. This day at eleven o'clock A. M., the first cornerstone of Hamilton-Oneida Academy* was laid by the honourable, the Baron de Steuben. . . ." After a prayer by the Rev. Samuel Kirkland, the Baron made an address in the course of which he said:

> It was not till after years of barbarism had passed away that Athens, or Rome, the Mistress of the World, erected a temple to Minerva or Apollo. Where among the modern nations of Europe shall we find an example of a wilderness in the short space of a few years converted into a garden, and the first exertions of its inhabitants directed to the extension of knowledge? . . .
>
> Scarcely has the plow turned the first furrow for necessary subsistence—scarcely has the first tree fallen by the stroke of the axe, when a portion of this subsistence, when *this very tree* is set apart to erect a temple dedicated to the best interests of the rising generation. . . . Yes, my friends, the people who dread famine less than ignorance . . . must be happy and respected.[9] . . .

The Baron officiated that morning as one of the Regents of the University of the State of New York. The building that he dedicated no longer exists. Its site is now a part of the campus of Hamilton College. When he made his address the cornerstone lay in a little clearing in the forest. His audience was a small group of pioneers and of friendly Oneida Indians, headed by their chief, Shanando. We can imagine the sturdy old German veteran reading his speech haltingly in his broken English. No doubt he wrote it first in French and gave it to Billy North to be Englished for him. But we may be sure that the thought, the striking contrast between the old world and the new, was his.

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* Renamed Hamilton College a few years later.

3

BY this time the Baron had decided to make his permanent home at Steuben. As his log house was too small and inconvenient for winter occupancy, and as he could not afford to build the manor house of his dreams this year, he decided to add a room to the log house. This work was begun early in June but was not finished until late in the summer. The new room with its broad fireplace made a comfortable apartment.*

Steuben was an enthusiastic gardener. Desjardins gave him seeds from France and tells us that his garden was "neat and well cared for." On September 1 he sent one of his men with a supply of strawberry plants to his friend John Porteous at Little Falls.[11] A little later he sent "a welcome supply of vegetables" to Pharoux and Desjardins in their camp on Black River. Toward the end of the month, most of the Castorland party were prostrated by an epidemic of dysentery. This compelled them to abandon their plan of spending the winter on their domain. Weakened by illness, they arrived at Steuben on October 3, "where," says Desjardins, "the Baron received us as persons saved from a shipwreck."

While Pharoux was convalescing at "Sixty" he paid a debt of gratitude to his host. He was an accomplished engineer and architect and was therefore able to commit one of the Baron's visions to paper. With Cockburn's survey map as a basis he made a landscape architect's sketch of the "Home Farm." This picture map is now in the Library of the Oneida Historical Society in Utica. It shows about 250 acres of cleared land symmetrically placed in the middle of the northern two thirds of the 800-acre tract. The cleared area is thus surrounded by a dense screen of the primeval forest forming the baronial park of about 550 acres. An imposing mansion, near the center of the cleared area, faces toward the south, "whence," says Pharoux, "there is a very extensive and agreeable prospect." From the portico of this mansion one would look across a wide terrace and an artificial lakelet "fed by Springs," to a permanent meadow of sixty acres and a long avenue leading through the woods to a smaller clearing containing the schoolhouse and the master's cottage. The rear windows of the mansion would look northward over gardens, extensive orchards and plowland. Tenant houses, barns and stables are also shown in the sketch. In the wooded valley of Steuben Creek to the west are the saw- and gristmills and the miller's cottage. Beyond the surrounding screen of forest, but invisible from the manor house, are the farms of the tenants. Pharoux also made a plan of the manor house which is no longer extant. But the Oneida Historical Society has another drawing by another architect showing a mansion with a frontage of one hundred and two feet. On either flank, a colonnade connects the main house with a smaller semi-detached building. The whole frontage of this imposing group is three hundred and thirteen feet. In this Mohawk Versailles the Baron would transcend the architectural glories of Belmont and Mount Vernon.

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* The State of New York has just erected (1936) a replica of the Baron's log house in the Memorial Park at Steuben.[10]

4

AFTER the Castorland party set out for New York on October 20, the Baron settled down for his first winter on his estate. North gives a glimpse of his life in his log house:

> Except the agreeable society of a young gentleman [Mulligan] . . . who read to or with him; and now and then a stranger passing through, or a friend who went into the wilderness to see him, his time was passed in solitude. . . . He was fond of chess. But it was chiefly from his library which was well stored that he drew support against the tedium of a situation so very different from that in which the greatest part of his life had been passed.[12]

We may be sure, also, that he spent many happy hours over Pharoux's picture map, making plans for next year's building and clearing. This year he was still hard up and pressed by debt, but next year the tide would turn. The Holland Company and the Castorland Company had brought enterprise into the wilderness. His New York farms would soon bring good prices. A little later the Pennsylvania and Virginia lands would come on the market. He was only sixty-four years old, a young man for his long-lived race. His father* had lived twenty years after his sixty-fourth birthday.

But reality was always driving him from his air castles. On November 24, being short of ready money, he wrote to John Porteous:

My Dear Sir: in Expectation of Your Retourn from New York and of your having received the payment of the draft on Coll. Benj. Walker of 100 £; Which you had the Goodness to advance to me, I take the Liberty to trouble You again by inclosing an other draft of two hundert £s on the Same Gentleman.

The necessaire acquisition of fourty Hads of Cattel on one Side, and the disapointement in Selling 5 or 6 hunderd acres of Land, on the other obliges me to have recours to You and to make Use of Your obliging offer to accept my drafts in case of neccessite. Should Even you have not the whole Some on hand send me by the Bearer only one hundred £; for which I am in Want of imediate payments and I shall Send for the rest as Occasion requiers.

If I had my [here the Baron erases three unsuccessful efforts to spell the word sleigh] dam the Sleigh, the first good [another erasure] road will be employed to pay my Visit to you.[13] . . .

5

DURING the following night the Baron was taken ill. But let Mulligan tell the story as he wrote it to Walker a few days later:

I am at length sufficiently composed to begin, O my dear Sir, a sad tale. On Tuesday morning last, our friend, my father, was struck with a palsy which deprived his left side of motion. The evening before, we parted at eleven; he was well, perfectly well. At four o'clock I was alarmed with the cry that he was dying, and when I entered his chamber he was in extreme agony and appeared to have suffered long. I sent for immediate assistance, and dispatched White for Major North.

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* Born 1699; died 1783.

He was sensible and could speak, retched violently, asked for an emetic which I gave him—it operated well. I then put him to bed, from which I had taken him by his desire. He continued to speak at intervals till about six, and from thence was speechless. He remained apparently sensible during the greater part of Tuesday, notwithstanding he was often in convulsions. That night he was pretty quiet, though the fits sometimes returned. He did not show any signs of sense afterwards. Every measure which the situation afforded was pursued to relieve him until the arrival of the doctor on Thursday. He administered medicines which gave some relief, but it was not long. The stroke was too violent, and yesterday, at half past twelve o'clock, oh, my God, my parent died!* O, Colonel Walker, our friend, my all. I can write no more. Come if you can. I am lonely. Oh, good God, what solitude is in my bosom. Oh, if you were here to mingle your tears with mine, there would be some consolation for the distressed[14]

John W. Mulligan.

North arrived in time for the simple funeral which he described:

Agreeably to his desire, often expressed, his remains were wrapped in his cloak, enclosed in a plain coffin, and placed in the earth and "without a stone to tell where it lies." A few tenants and servants, the young gentleman, his late companion, and one on whom for fifteen years his eye had never ceased to beam with kindness, followed in silence and in tears.[15]

Years later, according to North:

The commissioners of the town laid a road, a public road, near his grave. They either knew not or could not feel. Walker, his first and his most worthy aid-de-camp, snatched the remains of his dear friend and master from their sacrilegious grasp, hid them in the forest and gave a bounty to protect the hallowed wood from rude intrusion.[16]

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* November 28, 1794.

The Baron still sleeps where Walker placed him. The "hallowed wood" is now part of a State park dedicated to his memory by the people of New York. On a granite boulder near his tomb, a bronze tablet reminds us that his services were

"INDISPENSABLE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE."

NOTES

All letters from or to Washington (except where otherwise stated), as well as his army orders and the records of military boards and councils appointed by him, are taken from the Washington Papers, Library of Congress. As these documents are arranged chronologically, they will not be cited in the following notes when their dates are given in the text. This rule applies also to the resolutions, motions, and reports considered by the Continental Congress which are given chronologically in the Journals of Congress.

CHAPTER I

1. Hamilton College Library.

CHAPTER II

1. Kalkhorst, "Auf falscher Fährte der Genealogie." Confirmed later by Stöbe, "General Steubens Herkunft." The false genealogy is also given in *Historisches Portefeuille.*

2. Kalkhorst, "Steubens Abstammung von Karl dem Grossen," *Erie Tageblatt,* Sept. 27, 1923.

CHAPTER III

1. Kalkhorst, "Auf falscher Fährte"; Stöbe, *op. cit.; Historisches Portefeuille.*

CHAPTER IV

1. *Historisches Portefeuille.*
2. Hausen, *Staats-Materielen.*
3. *Historisches Portefeuille.*
4. Kapp, *Life of Frederick William von Steuben,* p. 45, citing the Sprague MSS.

CHAPTER V

1. Kalkhorst, "Steubens Dienstzeit im Heere Friedrichs des Grossen"; Schlözer, *Staatsanzeigen.*
2. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 49, citing the Sprague MSS.

CHAPTER VI

1. Kalkhorst, "Steubens Dienstzeit"; Schlözer, *Staatsanzeigen.*
2. Pauli, *Leben Grosser Helden* (Halle, 1759), III, 83.
3. Archenholz, *Geschichte des Siebenjahrigen Krieges* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 453.

CHAPTER VII

1. Kalkhorst, "Steubens Dienstzeit."
2. Prussian State archives.

3. *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen,* XXI, 199.
4. Kalkhorst, "Steubens Dienstzeit."
5. *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen,* XXI, 240.
6. *Journal von und für Deutschland.*
7. *Historisches Portefeuille.*
8. Schlözer, *Staatsanzeigen.*
9. *Politische Correspondenz,* XXI, 312–316.
10. *Idem,* pp. 409–413, 455–458, 487.
11. *Historisches Portefeuille.*
12. *Journal von und für Deutschland;* Schlözer, *op. cit.*
13. Ebeling, "Nachrichten von den Lebensumständen des Baron von Steuben," *Amerikanisches Magazin,* I, 144–163.
14. J. A. E. Preuss, *Lebensgeschichte Friedrichs des Grossen,* III, 149–150.

CHAPTER VIII

1. Ebeling, *op. cit.*
2. Kalkhorst, "Steubens Dienstzeit."
3. *Ibid.*
4. Kapp, *op. cit.* (German ed.), citing the Sprague MSS.

CHAPTER IX

1. The Steuben MSS.; for the rest of this memoir, see pp. 103–108.
2. Hausen, *op. cit.*
3. *Journal von und für Deutschland.*
4. Zingeler, "Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte und Altertumskunde in Hohenzollern.*
5. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER X

1. Zingeler, *op. cit.;* Kalkhorst, "Aus der Hofmarschallzeit Eines Grossen Amerikaners," *Erie Tageblatt,* Oct. 1, 1923.
2. *Journal von und für Deutschland.*
3. Zingeler, *op. cit.,* p. 33 *et seq.*
4. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 641 (probably from a verbal statement by John W. Mulligan, Steuben's secretary, with whom Kapp conferred while writing his book).
5. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Baden archives.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Carlyle, *Frederick the Great,* Bk. XXI, chap. iv.
8. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.
9. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Baden archives.
10. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.

CHAPTER XI

1. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.
2. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XII

1. Zingeler, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–49.
2. *Idem*, pp. 42–43.
3. *Idem*, p. 42.

CHAPTER XIII

1. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Zingeler, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–56.
4. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XIV

1. The Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Baden archives.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Burdett to Franklin, April 5, 1777, Franklin Papers.
6. Franklin Papers.
7. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XV

1. One of Steuben's autobiographical sketches is contained in his memorial to Vergennes, *Affaires Étrangères, Paris, Cor. Pol. États Unis*, XXII, ff. 614–619. Of this there is a preliminary draft in the Steuben MSS. in the N.Y. Hist. Soc. There is an account of his Parisian negotiations in a pamphlet privately printed by Steuben, giving an account of his claims against the United States, *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 19V, f. 542 *et seq.*; and another in a MS., "State of Facts Alluded to in Baron Steuben's Memorial," *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 164, f. 282 *et seq.* Of the latter there is a preliminary draft in the Steuben MSS. in the N.Y. Hist. Soc., and another in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. There are several other autobiographical sketches in the Steuben MSS., one of which is presented on pp. 103–108. I am indebted to Mr. Forest G. Sweet for still another version. There are also autobiographical fragments in many of Steuben's letters in the Steuben MSS. and other collections. Each of the above-mentioned documents gives some account of the Baron's two visits to Paris and his negotiations with St. Germain, Beaumarchais and the American Commissioners. No two of them tell exactly the same story and all of them contain deliberate misstatements of fact as well as incorrect dates—for Steuben's chronology was frequently inaccurate even when he was not myth-making. My account of the Parisian episode in chaps. xv and xvi has been made by reconstructing the most probable chain of facts from this uncertain material, after checking it against the letters of Franklin and Deane and many other documents, the most important of which are given in xvi and subsequent chapters.
2. Kalkhorst's copies of MSS. in the Hechingen archives.
3. Ebeling, *op. cit.*
4. Zingeler, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
5. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XVI

1. I am indebted to the American Autograph Shop for a copy of this bill.

2. The Washington Papers and the *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 164, f. 120.

3. *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 164, f. 131.

4. *Idem,* f. 122.

5. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*

INTERLUDE

1. Steuben MSS. This document is in English and was probably translated by one of the Baron's aides-de-camp from his first draft in French. For the first two paragraphs of this paper, see p. 53.

2. MS. collection of Mr, Forest G. Sweet.

CHAPTER XVII

1. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

2. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*

3. *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 19V, f. 547.

4. *Idem,* No. 164, f. 128.

CHAPTER XVIII

1. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

2. *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 137, I.

3. Steuben's account with the United States, an official abstract from the Treasury Records, *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 19V, f. 545.

4. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*

5. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 164, f. 130.

CHAPTER XIX

1. Peters to Steuben, Oct. 30, 1785, *American State Papers, Class IX Claims,* p. 13.

2. Steuben to Hancock, Feb. 6, 1778, Hist. Soc. of Penn.

3. *American State Papers,* pp. 11–12.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Peters to Steuben, Aug. 31, 1788, William L. Clements Library.

7. Laurens to Washington, in Burnett, *Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress,* III, 91.

8. Washington Papers and *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 19V, f. 585.

9. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

10. North, "Memoir of the Baron Steuben."

CHAPTER XX

1. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*
2. *Papers of the Continental Congress,* No. 147, I, f. 413.
3. *Journal of the Continental Congress,* Dec. 13, 1777.
4. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*
5. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XXI

1. My account of Steuben's operations at Valley Forge in this and subsequent chapters has been gleaned from Washington's orders and other papers in the Washington Papers; from official reports and correspondence in the *Papers of the Continental Congress;* from regimental orderly books, reports and other papers in the Old Records Division of the War Department; from Steuben's memorials, memoranda and a great mass of fragmentary material in the Steuben MSS. of the N.Y. Hist. Soc. and the Oneida Hist. Soc., and from contemporary newspapers in the Library of Congress.
2. Jones, *Life of Ashbel Greene,* p. 109.
3. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*
4. Long Island Hist. Soc.
5. There are many of the old orderly books in the Old Records Division of the War Department.

CHAPTER XXII

1. North, *op. cit.*
2. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 615.
3. North, *op. cit.*
4. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

CHAPTER XXIII

1. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. Burnett, *op. cit.,* III, 153.
4. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 129, from the original which he found in the possession of Thomas C. Amory.
5. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*
6. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*
10. N.Y. Hist. Soc.
11. *New Jersey Gazette,* May 6, 1778.

CHAPTER XXIV

1. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*
2. *Pennsylvania Packet,* May 13, 1778.
3. Laurens to Steuben, May 5, 1778, Hist. Soc. of Penn.
4. Steuben to Hamilton, Jan. 12, 1790, *American State Papers, Class IX Claims,* p. 14.

CHAPTER XXV

1. Long Island Hist. Soc.

2. Tower, *The Marquis de La Fayette in the American Revolution*, I, 336.

3. Gordon, *History of the War of Independence*, III, 92.

4. *Journal of Elias Boudinot*, p. 79.

5. "The Treason of Charles Lee," *Lee Papers*, IV, 335.

6. Hamilton to Boudinot, July 26, 1778, *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (Federal ed.), IX, 147.

7. Steuben to Board of War, May 27, 1778; Peters to Steuben, June 2, 1778, in Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.; drafts of proposed regulations and other pertinent documents, Steuben MSS.

8. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*

9. Hamilton to Duer, June 18, 1778, *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (Federal ed.), IX, 132.

CHAPTER XXVI

1. The principal authority for this battle is Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth;* Washington's reports to Congress, his correspondence with his subordinates and many other pertinent documents are in the Washington Papers; the record of the Lee court martial, giving the more or less conflicting testimony of many witnesses, is in the *Lee Papers*, III.

2. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.

3. Washington Papers.

4. North, *op. cit.*

5. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*

6. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*

7. Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

8. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*

CHAPTER XXVII

1. *Military Correspondence of John Laurens.*

2. Steuben MSS., Aug. 7, 1778, N.Y. Hist. Soc.

3. *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 164, f. 142.

4. Steuben to Laurens, Sept. 6, 1778, Long Island Hist. Soc.

5. Steuben to Peters, Sept. 30, 1778, Hist. Soc. of Penn.

CHAPTER XXVIII

1. *Lee Papers*, III, 253.

2. Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 165, citing the Sprague MSS.

3. Hamilton to Steuben, Dec. 19, 1778, *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (Federal ed.), IX, 155.

4. *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 147, III, f. 197.

5. Burnett, *op. cit.*, IV, 160. For greater clearness, I have taken the liberty of making some changes in the punctuation and paragraphing of this letter.

6. Reed MS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.

CHAPTER XXIX

1. I am indebted to Dr. H. Portell Villa for a copy of this letter from the Spanish archives, Seville.

2. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*
3. MS. collection of Mr. Forest G. Sweet.
4. Loménie, *Beaumarchais* (Edwards ed.), III, 175.
5. Old Records Division of the War Department.
6. There are many papers on the light infantry in the Washington Papers and the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
7. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 227.
8. From the manuscript autobiography of Major Amos Stoddard, courtesy of Mr. Fowler Stoddard Smith.
9. Peters Papers.
10. Steuben MSS.
11. Schlözer, *Briefwechsel.*
12. Zingeler, *op. cit.,* p. 68.
13. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.
14. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 231, citing the Sprague MSS.
15. *Recollections of Samuel Breck,* p. 260.

CHAPTER XXX

1. Old Records Division.
2. Washington to Congress, Aug. 20, 1780.
3. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.; there is a copy in the Washington Papers with Steuben to Washington, Jan. 26, 1780.
4. Kapp, *op. cit.,* p. 668.
5. *Journal of the Continental Congress,* March 27, 1780.
6. There is a copy in the Washington Papers with Steuben to Washington, March 15, 1780.

CHAPTER XXXI

1. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
2. *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (Federal ed.), IX, 199.
3. Thacher, *Military Journal during the Revolutionary War.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. For Jonathan Steuben and his family, see Richards, *Steuben, the Pioneer,* p. 15; Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County,* p. 441; Roberts, *History of Remsen,* p. 261; Doyle, *Frederick William von Steuben,* pp. 185–188. There are several letters from Jonathan in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
6. *Journal of the Continental Congress,* Sept. 25, 1780.

CHAPTER XXXII

1. MS. Memoirs of Duponceau.
2. Greene to Jefferson, Nov. 20, 1780, in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
3. Greene, *Life of Major General Nathanael Greene,* III, 57.
4. Instructions to Davies, Nov. 27, 1780, in Greene Papers; there is an extensive correspondence with Davies in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
5. Steuben to Washington, Dec. 8, 1780.
6. Hening, *Virginia Statutes at Large.*
7. Jefferson to Steuben, Feb. 12, 1780, in Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc. There is much further correspondence relating to Hoods in the Steuben MSS., the Washington Papers and the Greene Papers.
8. Hening, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER XXXIII

1. For a critical account of Jefferson's military administration, see Eckenrode, *The Revolution in Virginia;* for Arnold's invasion, see Lassiter, *Arnold's Invasion of Virginia.* Steuben's Journal of the Invasion and a great mass of pertinent letters, reports, orders and memoranda are in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc. His official reports, giving a daily record of events, are in the Washington Papers and the Greene Papers with retained copies in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
2. Lassiter, *op. cit.,* p. 10.
3. Jefferson to Steuben, Jan. 4, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
4. Gibson to Steuben, Jan. 5, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
5. Lassiter, *op. cit.,* p. 4.
6. Harrison to Steuben, Jan. 12, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
7. Jefferson to Steuben, Jan. 9, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
8. Greene to Steuben, Jan. 7, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
9. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
10. Jefferson to Steuben, Jan. 12, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
11. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
12. Tilly's Expedition, Lassiter, *op. cit.,* pp. 22–25; also described in Steuben's reports to Washington and Greene.
13. Steuben to Greene, Feb. 27, 1781, Greene Papers.

CHAPTER XXXIV

1. Greene Papers.
2. Steuben MSS., N. Y. Hist. Soc.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Captain Elliot to Steuben, March 18, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
5. Jefferson to Elliot, March 16, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
6. Greene to Steuben, March 11, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
7. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
8. Washington to Steuben, May 1, 1781, Washington Papers.
9. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
10. Davies to Steuben, March 27, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.

CHAPTER XXXV

1. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Steuben to Muhlenberg, April 1, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
4. Greene to Steuben, April 3, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
5. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
6. Jefferson to Steuben, April 3, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
7. Senf to Steuben, April 20, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
8. Phillips to Steuben, April 26, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
9. Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.

CHAPTER XXXVI

1. Lafayette to Wayne, May 7, 1781, Wayne Papers.
2. Greene Papers.
3. Greene to Steuben, May 1, 1781, Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.
4. Lafayette to Steuben, in Tower, *op. cit.,* II, 314.

5. Lafayette to Hamilton, May 23, 1781, *Works of Alexander Hamilton,* John C. Hamilton, ed., I, 262.

6. Greene Papers.

7. Zingeler, *op. cit.,* pp. 70-74.

8. *Ibid.*

9. This is covered by an item in the bill rendered by Beaumarchais later in 1785, in the possession of the American Autograph Shop.

10. In several letters in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc., Steuben describes the misconduct and depravity of his nephews.

11. The last will, dated Feb. 12, 1794, is in the Steuben MSS., N.Y. Hist. Soc.

CHAPTER XXXVII

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